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ABSTRACT

This third annual report presents the broad findings of studies attempting to provide a comprehensive description of the nature of families in Australia today and seeking to identify and analyze the many factors affecting their well-being. Studies that have not yet reached completion are also described. Specifically, six chapters cover (1) a reanalysis of census figures to provide data on changes in family composition; (2) studies and analyses of court and registry data to provide information on legal procedure related to families (the long term adjustment of mothers relinquishing their children for adoption and divorce issues such as property division, alimony, and maintenance and custody of children); (3) studies and census data on family economic issues (the cost of children, family income and housing, and the impact on families of the Australian tax transfer system); (4) studies of family support networks, including children's and marriage support services; (5) studies on family processes (children in two-parent and one-parent homes, children's reactions to divorce or the loss of a parent, and changes in marital relationships over time); and (6) the staffing and administration of the Institute of Family Studies. (CB)

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1982–83 ANNUAL REPORT

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Board of Management Institute of Family Studies

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Contents

Introduction 1

1 Changes in Family Composition and Values Related to Family Formation 4
2 Family Law 31
3 Families and the Economy 48
4 Family Support 71
5 Family Processes 98
6 Administration and Research Support 107

Appendix 1: Staff Lists and Activities 113

Appendix 2: Budget Information 118

INSTITUTE OF FAMILY STUDIES
Board of Management

LEWIS HOUSE,
766 Elizabeth Street, MELBOURNE. VIC. 3000.
Telephone (03) 342 9100.

Senator the Hon. Gareth Evans, Q.C.,
Attorney-General,
Parliament House,
CANBERRA. A.C.T. 2600

Dear Senator Evans,

In accordance with the Family Law (Institute of Family Studies) Regulations, we have much pleasure in presenting the third Annual Report of the Institute of Family Studies. The report relates to the period from 1 July, 1982 to 30 June, 1983.

K.J.A. ASCHE (Presiding Member)
D.E. EDGAR (Director)

Melbourne
March 1984

Introduction

The Institute of Family Studies was established to conduct, coordinate and encourage research into factors affecting marital and family stability. While this is clearly an ongoing task, the Institute is now in a position to describe some of those factors and to point to significant changes which have occurred or are now taking place.

We are in that position only because we took a long-term view of 'family' research rather than a short-term or piecemeal one. The decision was made very early in the Institute's life to monitor three broad areas. These were the areas of:

- family formation, that is, the attitudes and actual behaviour of young Australians as they decided to leave (or not to leave) home, to marry (or not to marry), to have (or not to have) children;
- family reformation, that is, the other end of the process; what leads families to break down (in a functional sense), to break up (via separation or divorce or widowhood), or to take new forms (via remarriage, step parenting, group living, etc.);
- family policy impacts, that is, the actual effects of government policies and administrative procedures on families of different types living in differing circumstances.

All three are seen to be inextricably linked. The family is not merely an isolated unit living its own private life, but rather a socially and politically structured unit which reflects the very nature of the society and its cultural values.

The well-being and stability of Australian families should be one of the most basic concerns of governments at all levels. The policies and programs developed by governments determine the social and economic environment in which families have to operate. In turn, the changing nature of families in Australia presents new problems and challenges for policy makers. The complex inter-relationship between policies and family structures and well-being should be the concern of government advisers, researchers and the many interest groups that seek to influence policy. Yet it is often the case that no such concern is evident in the policy process or that where some attention is paid to the needs of families, it is based on inadequate information or on inaccurate perceptions of family life as it has developed in contemporary Australian society.

The Institute of Family Studies strongly asserts the view that families must be considered in the policy process and that such consideration should be based on accurate and comprehensive information about the changing structures of families and the impact of policy changes upon their well-being.

There is no doubt that many families are finding the task of providing for their members' needs more and more difficult. The current recession has reduced work and therefore earning opportunities, especially for women and young people. Levels of income support for nearly all groups depending on pensions and benefits are maintained at levels lower than those necessary to avoid poverty. The tax treatment of families has favoured those without children and has particularly disadvantaged large families. In addition, reduced levels of provision in the fundamental areas of housing, transport, health, education and child care have had most effect on families least able to provide for themselves.

The organisation of government is necessarily based on functional lines. We have Departments of Social Security, Housing, Health, etc. With such a structure there is no one place within government where the well-being of families is a primary concern. Indeed, most policies are aimed at the well-being of individuals.

This is not surprising, since a client group as all-embracing and diverse as 'families' is on the one hand no single Department's responsibility and on the other is the concern of nearly all Departments. While understandable, the resultant fragmented approach to families or neglect of families as a relevant policy focus overlooks the unique influence that families exert on their members. For example, the family acts as an economic unit in influencing production, it affects the transfer of wealth or disadvantage from generation to generation, it is an agent of socialisation, it is the main unit of economic consumption, and it is the primary context for development of interpersonal relationships, a context that can be destructive as well as enabling and supportive.

To target policies on individuals may be appropriate in some functional fields such as income distribution, but only against the background of a knowledge of the distributional arrangements within and between families. In some functional areas, such as housing, knowledge of patterns of collective living, including differing family forms, is essential. In considering the aged, ethnic groups, women, etc., policies are always affected by the impact of family as well as socio-economic status, gender and so on.

Conversely, policy always impinges on families. For example, discussion about income security proposals revolves about the impact various arrangements will have on primary objectives of vertical or horizontal redistribution of wealth, but also should be concerned with the effects of such proposals on families. The labour force participation of married women, the influences and incentives for families to break down, for more one-parent families to be created, are some of the topics exhaustively debated. This argument contends that policies affect the well-being of families whether such impact is recognised or not.

Consequently, such effects should be made known as far as possible and policies should explicitly set out to improve rather than be detrimental to family well-being.

Underpinning the concern about policies for families are two fundamental issues:

- what basic objectives should social policy seek to pursue?
- how should family be treated as a policy perspective?

Regarding the first issue, policy makers, those who seek to influence the policy process and others who are often faced with decisions about which set of policies to support should penetrate the surface level of specific details of programs and policies to assess the ultimate outcomes of the strategies proposed. Which families will benefit and which will not? Are there members of families who are disadvantaged relative to other family members? Will the broader community be better or worse off? While answers to these questions will ultimately come back again to the particular sets of values held by decision makers, it is important that as much objective information as possible be available to allow reasonable assessments of the above issues to be made. Too often the rhetoric of the family has been invoked to avoid more rational debate.

As to whether family is a valid or an important focus for policy considerations, it is recognised that there are numerous difficulties with its use. It is imprecise when dealing with specific policy issues, it is not a perspective that enables a clear constituency to be organised on its behalf and it has been used to divert attention from other social needs. Nevertheless, family impinges on policy as policies profoundly affect families. Families, as a basic form of social organisation, are enduring and pervasive even if eventually changing in character, composition and function. It is unrealistic to ignore family as a focus for policy — not the only focus nor possibly the most important, but certainly as one way of assessing social outcomes and approaching social issues.

The Institute has set out to provide a comprehensive description of the nature of families in Australia today and to identify and analyse the many factors affecting their well-being. It is hoped that by improving those factors which are able to be influenced by collective action, especially at a governmental level, the ability of families and their members to achieve positive personal and social goals will be enhanced.

Our major effort in the first three years has been put into studies that would show just what 'the Australian family' is and where it is going in contemporary Australian society. Rising divorce rates, increased welfare dependency, the women's movement, a failing work ethic were often linked loosely in broad assertions that 'the family is under attack', or that 'marriage as an institution is dead'. Neither the assertions nor the links between factors had been demonstrated. Nor was there even a satisfactory picture of the families themselves, because censuses and other surveys did not describe the complex inter-relationships between different family household members.

In this sense then, the Institute had to start at the beginning, reanalysing census and other social survey data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and drawing new samples for our own surveys designed specifically to answer several of the most pressing questions. Our main vehicle was the national 'Family Formation Project', the first stage of which is now completed. Contact with over 9000 households throughout Australia yielded a detailed picture of family types and was followed by interviews of 2500 young people aged between 18-34, the key 'family formation' years. A second vehicle which was to have been a national study of divorced people, was reduced to a three-State study because of limited funding and sampling difficulties, and the third was a series of background papers and studies on policy impact issues. All three have borne fruit and the Institute believes its findings to be of national significance for current practice and future planning .

In this third Annual Report the broad facts and findings only are indicated, in the hope that politicians and others will use it as a 'resource book' on Australian family information and on the work of the Institute. Detailed reports are available (or in preparation) on the findings briefly outlined here.

1

Changes in Family Composition and Values Related to Family Formation

Family Structure 5
First Marriages 10
Fertility 14
Changing Family and Sex Role Values 17
Divorce 20
Widowhood 28
Remarriages 29

The composition of a family can only be defined in terms of the number and characteristics of its members. These characteristics might be demographic, economic, social, or even psychological, legal or medical. For example, from the demographic perspective, family composition is defined in terms of the sex, age, and marital status of the members. From the economic perspective, however, we may prefer to consider family composition in terms of the number of income earners, the number unemployed, or even the expenditure patterns of the members. From the social perspective, family composition might be defined in terms of the social origins of the members, their education, religion, ethnicity and so on. In this chapter, the emphasis will be upon the demographic composition of families.

The composition of families is continuously changing. The picture of family composition obtained from successive censuses and surveys is, therefore, like a series of snapshots of a changing situation. Between snapshots, the various demographic processes may alter the form of any particular family as that family passes through its lifetime. At the most simple conceptual level, the family life cycle begins with a marriage; there follows then in succession an initial childless stage, a childbearing stage, a childrearing stage, a launching stage during which the children leave home, a second childless or 'empty nest' stage, ending with the dissolution stage as each of the original partners dies.

In reality, families often undergo very different and more complicated histories than this. For example, families may experience ex-nuptial births, cohabitation, divorce, separation, early death of one or both of the partners or the death of a child, remarriage, adoption, step-parenting, births in a subsequent marriage, the return of children who had previously left home, or the joint residence of an aged person from the prior generation. All of these experiences affect the composition of the family, sometimes even to the extent that it may be more appropriate to talk about discontinuities in the family's history rather than stages.

Varying combinations of ages of family members also identify families which have specific needs and experiences. For example, if the age gap between parents and children is narrow, then the period during which the couple will be together after all their children have left home will be longer. The relative ages of children will determine the extent to which an older child can provide child care support for the parents.

The Institute of Family Studies has a continuing function to monitor trends in family composition and the demographic determinants of these trends. As part of this function, the Institute has provided support to agencies such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics in the improvement of census and vital statistics in Australia. Particular attention has been paid in the year of this Report to divorce and remarriage statistics and preparations for the collection of family statistics at the 1986 Census.

Besides the monitoring of demographic trends, the Institute sets out to provide an interpretation of the observed trends. To this end, the Institute has carried out a study of the family formation patterns of Australians aged 18-34 years. The results of this study are being compared with the findings of other studies so that a picture can be obtained of changing values and attitudes. Intensive case studies of a sub-sample of the survey respondents have also been conducted. In 1985, the original sample will be re-interviewed, so that we can better understand the dynamics of changing family formation patterns.

The broader outlines of the research results are presented in the remainder of this chapter.

Family Structure

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) provides invaluable sources of information on families through its censuses and surveys. While none of these sources can give a complete

10

picture of family life and its changes, we can, as we have said, build up a picture from these snapshots, with the 1982 Family Survey giving us one of the more detailed pictures so far about Australian families.

Over the past twenty years in Australia, several trends in household and family formation have been noticeable, many of them being reflections of similar trends in comparable countries such as the United States, Canada and Britain. For instance, while our total population aged 15 and over increased by 53 per cent between 1966 and 1981, the number of households in existence increased by 68 per cent. Concomitant with that increase in households, there has been a drop in the average number of persons living within them, from 3.6 persons in 1961 to 3.0 persons in 1981. In Canada in the same year, the average household size was 2.9, in Britain and the United States, 2.7 persons. This drop in average household size has continued throughout the twentieth century; for instance, in 1921 it was 4.4 persons per Australian household.

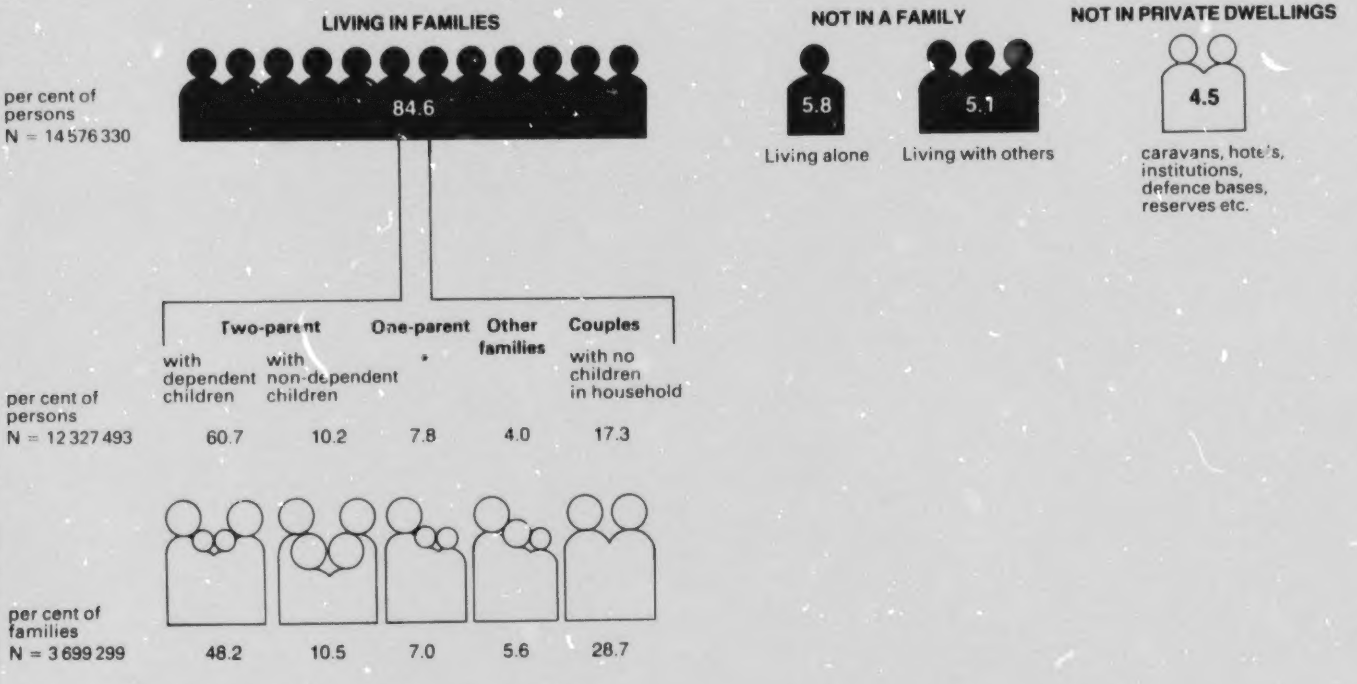
At the same time, the number of households containing only one person, which had remained at around 9 per cent of all households for the early part of this century, began to climb from 10.3 per cent in 1961 until, in the 1982 ABS Family Survey, 19.5 per cent of all households contained a person living alone. In Canada, the figure was 20 per cent in 1981; in the United States, 23 per cent in 1982.

A household is defined as a group of people living together under the one roof and sharing common eating arrangements. Thus, a household and a family are not necessarily one and the same. A family, broadly defined, consists of people related to one another by blood, marriage or adoption. So a family need not all live in the one household, but for practical reasons, only people living in the same household have been grouped together as a family in the census. On the other hand, all members of a household need not be members of the same family.

Family classification was introduced into Australian censuses at the 1966 Census. The classification system used in 1966 has since been followed fairly closely in subsequent censuses and ABS surveys. As the system used is complicated it cannot be described here, however, some of its limitations should be mentioned. The most important of these is the fact that persons temporarily absent from their usual place of residence are excluded from the family coding at their usual residence but included for consideration in the family coding at the place where they are temporarily staying. This means that the absence of one parent from the home on census night will cause that family to be recorded as a 'one-parent family' and the absent parent to be recorded elsewhere as a 'non-family individual'. Similarly, visitors or other relatives under the age of 16 years are classified as members of the family where they are staying if their own parents are not present and identifiable. There are several other limitations of the census classification of families which cannot be enumerated here. Both the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Institute of Family Studies have been considering these definitional problems in planning for the 1986 Census. In the meantime, for the following description of family structure in Australia, we have occasionally found it necessary to amend the census data so that the results better accord with conventional definitions of families.

The 1981 Family Profile (Figure 1.1) shows the types of families and non-family households in existence at the time of the Census. Of the total Australian population, 84.6 per cent of people were living in families, 5.8 per cent living alone, 5.1 per cent in households comprised of unrelated persons and 4.5 per cent were in non-private dwellings. Some of those in non-private dwellings were families living long-term in caravan parks. These families, despite their special needs, are excluded from family coding at the census and so their number and composition are unknown.

Figure 1.1 Family profile, 1981



* adjusted by transferring 'married' one-parent to two-parent families

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Population and Housing, 1981*

Of the 12 327 493 people living in families, 60.7 per cent were in the conventional family of two parents with dependent children. This represents slightly over half the total Australian population. The next biggest category of families was that consisting of couples with no children present who constituted 17.3 per cent of all persons living in families and 15 per cent of the total Australian population. If families rather than persons are taken as the units of comparison, then 28.7 per cent of all families consisted of couples with no children in the household. One-parent families account for 7.8 per cent of all persons in families and 7 per cent of all families. In arriving at the estimate of the number of one-parent families, it has been assumed that all one-parent families where the parent was recorded as 'now married' were in fact instances of the temporary absence of the spouse rather than genuine one-parent families.

Another recent source of family statistics is the 1982 ABS Family Survey. The results of this survey are set out in Figure 1.2. The unit of analysis in this figure is not families or persons, as in Figure 1.1, but households. Institutions are excluded but long-term occupants of caravan parks are included. Figure 1.2 again displays the prominence of single-person households and households consisting of a couple with no offspring in the household. Figure 1.2 also shows that very few family households have other relatives present, that is extended family relationships beyond parent-child and husband-wife (including de facto partnerships).

Figure 1.2 also provides a breakdown of the marital status of the partners in two-parent and couple families and of the sex of the head in one-parent families. It shows that 71.2 per cent of all families with offspring in the household are two-parent families with both parents still in their first marriage. Thus, while considerable change has taken place in family types in recent years, most children are living with their own natural parents. The other side of the picture, however, is that 16.2 per cent of all families with offspring in the household are one-parent families and 10.2 per cent are families where one or both parents has remarried.

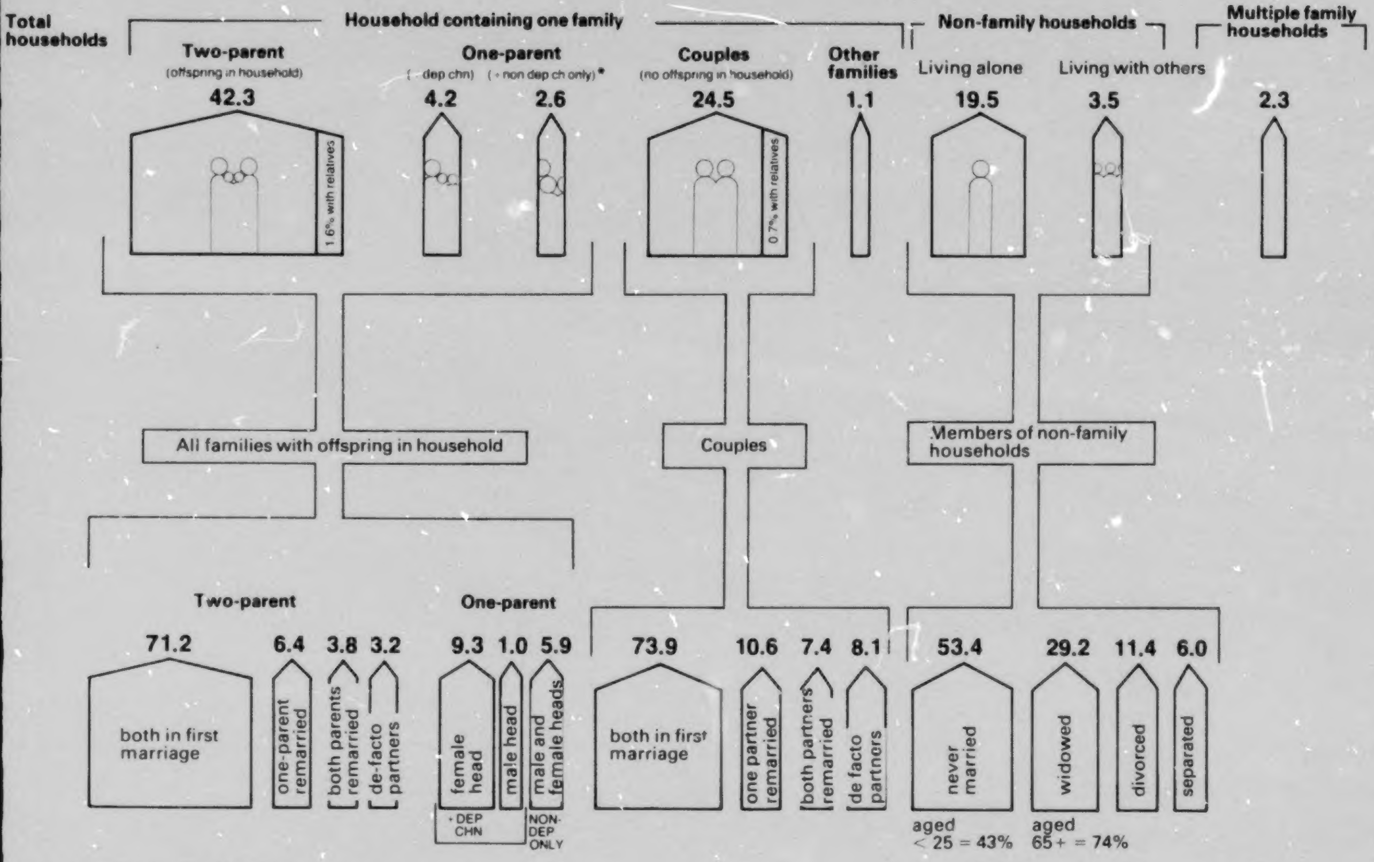
More than two-thirds of one-parent families were headed by a parent who was separated or divorced while about 20 per cent were headed by a parent who had never been married. One-parent families with dependent children were nine times as likely to be headed by a woman as by a man.

Another interesting feature of Figure 1.2 is that fully 18 per cent of all households consisted of married couples without children in the households where both partners were in their first marriage. This group really consists of two major sub-groups, those who have not had any children and those whose children have all left home.

This then provides a recent picture of the structure of families in Australia. It remains then to consider the trend or extent of change in the various family types. This is done in Table 1.1 using data from the 1966 and 1981 Censuses. The growth of one-parent families, particularly those headed by women, is quite apparent as is the growth of couples without children. In contrast, the proportion of two-parent families with children has declined, particularly those where there were no dependent children. The growth of one-parent families was centred on those headed by a person who was separated or divorced. One-parent families headed by a woman who had never married were the fastest growing family type but their absolute proportion of all families was still small. The final point worth noting is that the growth of families consisting of couples without children was spread right across the age range of couples.

Without doing any more refined analysis we could draw the following conclusions. The decline in two-parent families, the rise of one-parent families and the rise of couple families in the 30-44 age range are all related to the increased incidence of divorce. The earlier

Figure 1.2 Family profile, 1982



* estimate based on 1981 Census

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Family Survey 1982*

Table 1.1 Percentage change in the proportion of the population aged 15 and over who were heads or partners of the head in particular family types, 1966-1981

Family Type	*Percentage change in proportions, 1966-81*			
	Males (heads or partners of head)		*Females (heads or partners of head)*	
All families	− 1.3		− 1.2	
Two parents with dependent children	− 8		− 10	
Two parents with only non-dependent children	−18		−20	
One parent with dependent children	+21		+99	
Head never married		0(a)		+443(a)
Head separated or divorced		+62(a)		+145(a)
Head widowed		−28(a)		−21(a)
Couples without children	+20		+18	
Head aged 15-29		+17(b)		+11(b)
Head aged 30-44		+16(b)		+13(b)
Head aged 45+		+22(b)		+19(b)

(a) base used is all persons aged 15 and over of the same sex and marital status
(b) base used is all persons of the same sex and age group

departure of children from the parental home explains the decline in the proportion of families consisting of two parents with only non-dependent children and the compensating rise in the proportion of older couples without children. It also partly explains the rise in couples without children in the youngest age group. The rise in this last-mentioned group is also related to young couples delaying their first birth.

Finally, it should be noted that there has been a considerable rise between 1966 and 1981 in the proportion of 'non-family' households. The proportion headed by men increased about 90 per cent while the proportion headed by women increased by 50 per cent. These increases were greatest among young people aged 15-29 reflecting early departure from the parental home and the delay of marriage.

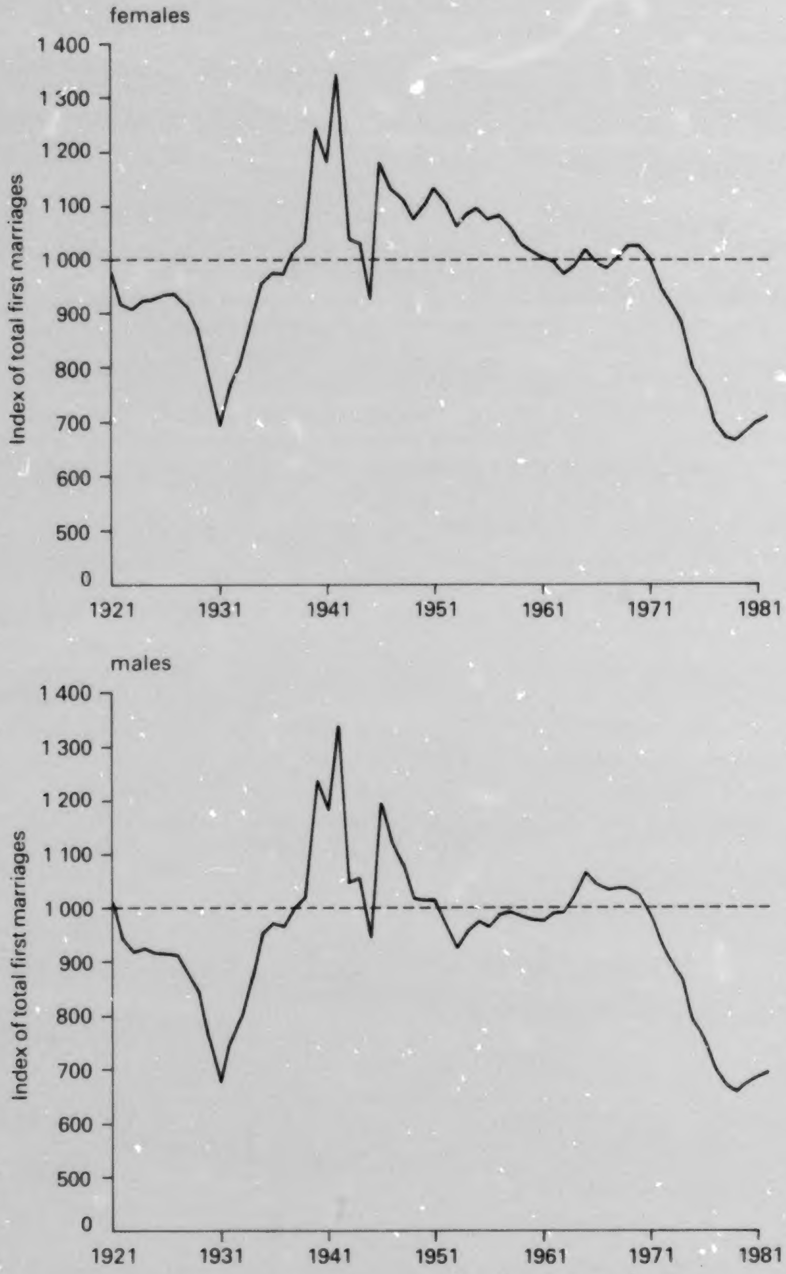
In the following sub-sections we shall discuss the particular demographic trends which are contributing to these observed changes in family structure.

First Marriages

Historical research in Western societies over several centuries has shown that the timing of marriage is greatly affected by temporal events such as wars and depressions. Economic recessions almost inevitably lead to the postponement of marriages. The index of total first marriages is a useful indicator of the annual 'popularity' of marriage. If marriage rates at each age remained unchanged over a long period of time, the value of the index would be the percentage of people who ever marry during their lifetime. If, however, marriage rates across a wide range of ages rise over a short period, there will be a concentration of marriages in that short period. In this circumstance, the index of total first marriages will rise above the long-term average of the percentage of people who ever marry. On the other hand, if marriages are postponed, the index will fall below this average. The values of this index in Australia from 1921 to 1982 are shown in Figure 1.3.

This chart of the popularity of marriage shows that marriages were postponed during the depression years of the 1930s with the low point being reached in 1931. During the early

Figure 1.3 Index of total first marriages by sex: Australia 1921-1982



years of the war, when Australia was under threat, the popularity of marriage hit its highest point (1942). At the time, marriage was described as a 'war disease', a disease attributed on one hand to a felt need for personal security during troubled times and on the other, to the ease of marrying when there was no need for the couple to set up a new household.

From the early post-war years right through until the early 1970s, marriage enjoyed a very long run of popularity. This phenomenon, which has been described as 'the marriage boom' was also experienced in other Western societies. The boom was primarily the result of a long-term decline in the ages at which people married, that is, marriages were brought forward in time. However, during this period, the proportion of people who never married during their lifetime also fell. The percentage of persons who are still never married by age group 45-49 is a good indicator of the proportion of people who never marry at all during their lifetime. The percentages of persons never married, applying at the time of the Australian censuses from 1921 to 1981, are shown in Table 1.2. The row relating to women aged 45-49 shows a decline from 17 per cent never married in 1921 to only 4 per cent in 1981. For men, the decline has been from 20 per cent to 8 per cent.

In Table 1.2, the war-time and post-war declines in age at first marriage can also be observed in the changes in the percentages never married at younger ages, especially age groups 20-24 and 25-29. For example, the percentage of women aged 20-24 who had never married declined from 69 per cent in 1933 to 36 per cent in 1971.

The post-war marriage boom came to a halt early in the 1970s and has been succeeded by a substantial slump, greater in magnitude than that which occurred during the 1930s. The slump appears to have reached its low point in 1979. The subsequent rise in the index of total first marriages indicates that some of those people who backed away from marriage during the 1970s have more recently married at somewhat older ages than was the norm during the marriage boom period. Some observers have predicted that the upturn in marriage rates foreshadows another boom as the back-log of single people ultimately

Table 1.2 Percentage of males and females who had never married by age group Australia, 1921-1981

	1921	*1933*	*1947*	*1954*	*1961*	*1966*	*1971*	*1976*	*1981*
Age Group	*Percentage never married in the age group*								
A. Males									
15-19	99.6	99.6	99.3	99.2	99.1	98.7	98.6	98.9	99.4
20-24	85.4	87.2	76.5	74.5	72.8	70.0	63.9	66.7	77.4
25-29	52.2	56.1	37.9	36.5	33.2	29.3	25.7	25.5	34.8
30-34	31.4	32.6	21.7	19.6	19.2	16.2	13.9	13.0	15.5
35-39	23.1	21.3	16.4	14.0	13.3	12.7	10.9	9.5	10.1
40-44	20.3	16.3	14.5	12.4	10.9	10.6	10.0	8.7	8.2
45-49	19.7	14.7	13.9	11.6	10.0	9.5	9.0	8.8	8.1
B. Females									
15-19	96.4	96.1	94.4	93.1	93.0	91.8	91.2	92.7	95.7
20-24	66.4	68.8	51.4	41.0	39.5	40.3	35.7	40.1	54.5
25-29	36.5	37.6	21.0	15.0	12.4	12.2	11.6	13.1	19.1
30-34	23.8	22.5	13.8	9.6	7.7	6.8	6.5	7.0	8.4
35-39	18.9	17.0	12.6	8.6	6.5	5.6	5.0	5.1	5.4
40-44	17.7	15.1	12.9	9.2	5.6	5.4	4.8	4.5	4.4
45-49	16.6	14.3	12.6	10.4	7.4	5.9	4.9	4.6	4.1

marry. There is a question, however, whether all of these people will marry or whether we shall see a return to higher percentages remaining never married throughout their life. In numerical terms, if the proportions never married in 1981 had remained the same as in 1976, an additional 150000 women and an equal number of men would have been married by 1981. Many of these 300000 people may already be living in a couple relationship outside of marriage and may prefer to remain that way. It is important therefore to give some attention to the values of young people in relation to marriage.

In the Institute's 1981/82 Family Formation Study of Australians aged 18-34, 52 per cent were currently married, 39 per cent expected to marry or remarry in the future, while only 8 per cent did not expect that they would ever marry or remarry. The main reasons given by those not expecting to marry were a preference for the freedom and lack of legal constraints of the single state among those who had never married and disillusionment with marriage among those who had been married. Among those not married, only 8 per cent felt that they were under any pressure to marry, the pressure most often being from parents. At the same time, 40 per cent of those not married said that their parents would be 'extremely' pleased to see them married and a further 30 per cent of parents would have been 'rather' pleased. Parents apparently let their feelings be known without seeming to be applying pressure. The perceived sovereignty of the young person in decisions about marriage is reflected in the fact that 71 per cent of those not married stated categorically that they would go ahead and marry a person to whom their parents objected and only 3 per cent said that they would bow to their parents' objection. Few respondents, however, expected that their parents would object to a potential partner on the grounds of difference in race or religion.

Security evidently plays a major part in the decision to marry as 83 per cent of men and 66 per cent of women who were not married said that they would like to be financially secure and settled in their job before marrying. This finding, together with the finding that most single people expect to marry sometime, suggests that the movement away from marriage which took place in the 1970s may have been closely related to the economic downturn and the economic insecurity which accompanied it. However, more general values regarding marriage also tend to suggest a high level of caution or uncertainty. Only 40 per cent of all respondents agreed that married people were more likely to be happy than those who go through life without marrying and 41 per cent agreed with the statement that there are few happy marriages these days. Women were more likely to express such uncertainties about marriage than men.

There was consequently strong support for strategies which would minimise the risks of marrying the wrong person: 79 per cent agreed that people should take at least a year to get to know one another before marrying; 78 per cent said that it was alright to live together without planning to get married; 63 per cent said that couples should make sure that they are sexually compatible before marrying. Evidently high levels of economic insecurity and the demonstration effect of a high divorce rate have made young people extremely tentative about marriage. They speak with two voices. They do not agree that single people are lonely or that single people miss having close relationships while at the same time they strongly agree (85 per cent) that marriage provides love, warmth and affection. Thus it could be said with only slight exaggeration that the adjectives ambivalent, uncertain, apprehensive, equivocal, confused and inconsistent apply in the attitudes towards marriage of many young people. Therefore, although most young people will say that they expect to marry, their level of confidence about marriage is low. This casts doubt on the likelihood of a marriage boom in the near future.

Another factor that sheds doubt on the likelihood of an ensuing marriage boom is the recent upturn in the average age of leaving school and the association between age at marriage and age at leaving school. For example, among women aged 20-24 in 1981, 30 per cent of those who left school at 18 had married. This percentage rises to 36 per cent for those leaving school at 17, 50 per cent for those leaving at 16 and 58 per cent for those who left school at 15. If, in the present context of unemployment, young people remain in school longer, then marriage is likely to be further postponed.

A final point of interest in relation to first marriages is that the long delay of marriage by some people combined with the earlier termination of marriage by others has led to the emergence of a new, older market of potential partners. The impact of this market on remarriages is considered below.

Fertility

Levels of fertility in Australia in the nineteenth century were very high indeed. Among women born in the years 1831-1846 who were still living at the time of the 1911 Census, around 40 per cent had had nine or more births. Between the 1870s and the 1930s, however, fertility declined very substantially, eventually reaching a level in the early 1930s which was below the level of long-term replacement of the population. Effective, although perhaps not comfortable, control over fertility was thus well established by the 1930s. There seems little doubt that this decline of fertility is the most significant factor to have affected the structure of the Australian family in the past century. Its main accompaniment and probably its main cause was a change in the role of children in families — essentially a change from children being net producers to their being net consumers in the household economy.

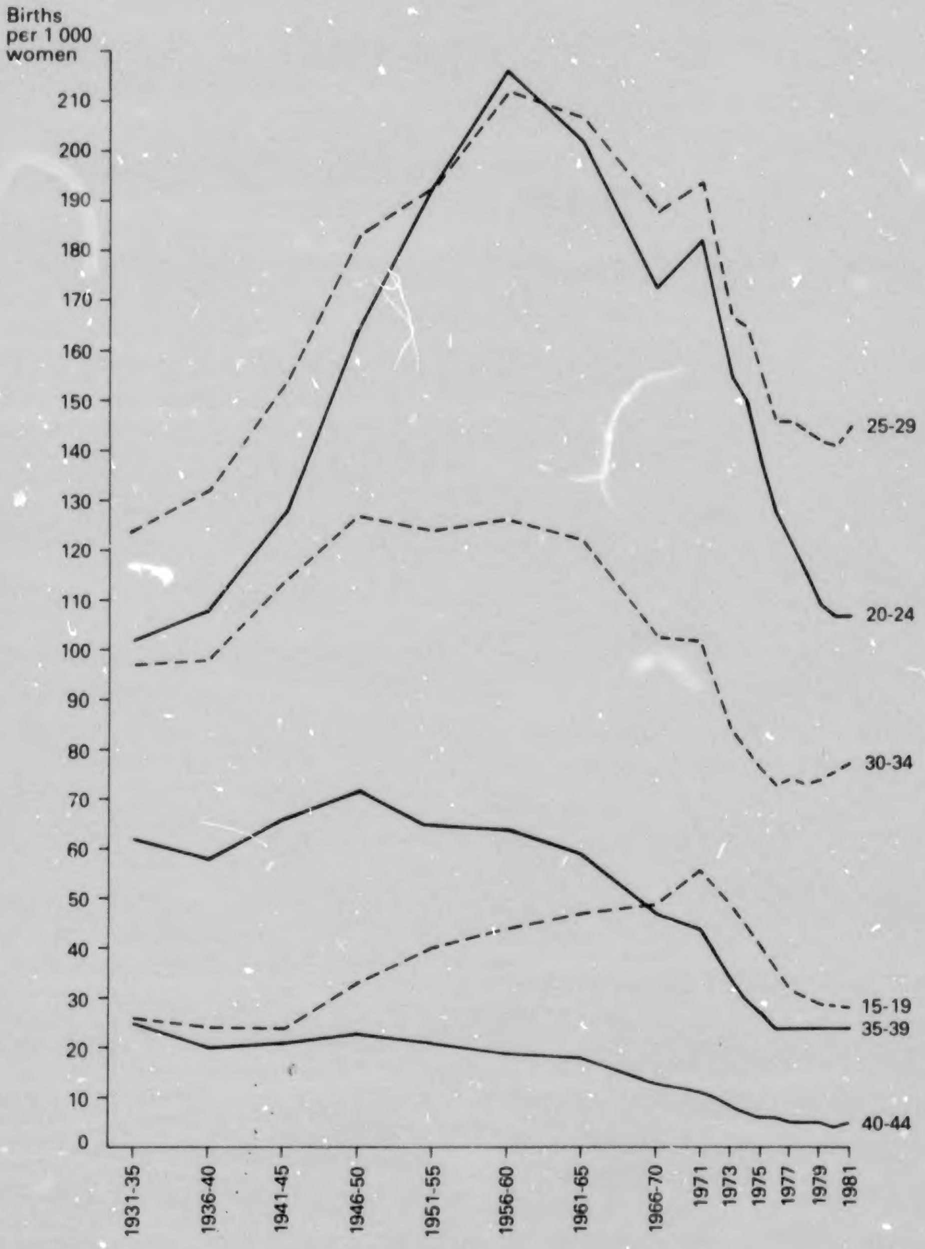
The course of fertility since the 1930s is set out in Table 1.3 and Figure 1.4. The figure shows age-specific fertility rates, that is, the proportion of all women of a given age group who had a birth during a twelve month period. The table shows total fertility rates which indicate the average number of children that would be born to a group of women as they pass through the reproductive ages, if they experienced the particular age-specific fertility rates applying in the given period. The total fertility rate is the sum of the age-specific fertility rates.

The total fertility rate increased from the low level of the 1930s to reach a high point in the period 1956-1960. It remained relatively high through to 1971 after which a sustained decline occurred. This decline bottomed out in 1980 at the lowest level ever recorded in

Table 1.3 Total fertility rates, Australia, 1931-1982

Period	*Total Fertility*	*Year*	*Total Fertility*
1931-35	2.19	1971	2.95
1936-40	2.21	1972	2.74
1941-45	2.54	1973	2.49
1946-50	3.02	1974	2.40
1951-55	3.18	1975	2.22
1955-60	3.41	1976	2.06
1961-65	3.29	1977	2.02
1966-70	2.87	1978	1.96
1971-75	2.56	1979	1.91
1976-80	1.97	1980	1.89
		1981	1.94
		1982	1.94

Figure 1.4 Age specific fertility rates (births per 1000 women of given age group), 1931-1981, Australia



Australia. Since 1980, the rate has risen slightly. These changes are not due simply to changes in the number of births that women have during their lifetime. It is important to realise that annual or five-yearly total fertility rates are also influenced by shifts in the ages at which women have their children. For example, in the period 1951-1965, women, because they married younger, began to have their children at younger ages. This is reflected in the rises in age-specific fertility rates at ages under 25. Older women during this same period were still experiencing fertility rates based on the former age pattern of childbearing. This meant that births to women of different ages became concentrated into this period. A study by Ruzicka and Choi of Australian fertility patterns has shown that women born in 1913-1918 and women born in 1943-1948 will end up with an average of 2.5 children during their lifetime, but the earlier group had 40 per cent of their births after age 30 compared to an estimate of only 20 per cent for the more recent group.

The high levels of fertility recorded in the period 1951-1965 were not, however, purely a result of shifts in the timing of births. There was also a rise in the number of children that women had during their lifetime. This measure reached a peak of 3.0 children on average for women born in the years 1928-1938. This compares with averages for women born in 1913-1918 and 1943-1948 of 2.5 as mentioned above. The higher lifetime fertility thus coincided with a shift of childbearing to younger ages in the period 1951-1966. During this time, societal structures were geared to childbearing and childrearing on a relatively large scale and social attitudes were weighted towards a viewpoint of women as homemakers. Education levels for women were relatively low and participation of married women in the workforce was restricted. During this period also, the percentage of brides pregnant at marriage rose considerably from 14 per cent in 1951 to 23 per cent in 1964.

In the mid 1960s, the situation began to change as more married women entered or remained in the labour force and as fertility became an aspect of a couple's life which could generally be planned with a high degree of certainty. This led to a movement towards delaying the first birth. For example, for women married in 1960, 68 per cent had had their first birth before the end of the second year of marriage. For those married in 1967, this percentage had dropped to 54 per cent, while for marriages in the later half of the 1970s, the proportion dropped to below 35 per cent. This pattern of delay of the first birth was a forerunner to couples living together without marrying, a pattern of life which became very prominent in the 1970s. In association with these trends, the later age at marriage and freer access of single people to contraception and abortion, led to a substantial decline during the 1970s in the proportion of brides pregnant at marriage.

As discussed above, births were concentrated in the 1950-1965 period because younger women were having their births at increasingly younger ages while older women were maintaining the former pattern of births at older ages. During the 1970s, the reverse situation applied as younger women delayed their first birth while older women moved to a pattern of reduced fertility at older ages. The aversion to childbearing at ages in the mid-thirties or above has become very great and is reflected in the widespread resort to sterilisation as a means of fertility control. Women who have avoided late childbearing are in the main those who married early and had their children early during the 1960s and the first part of the 1970s. The important research question for the future is whether the aversion to late childbearing will dissipate as the younger generation, who have delayed their first birth, move through their thirties. For this generation to achieve an average family size of at least two children, fertility rates at ages 30 and over would have to increase markedly in the future. While there is already evidence of a small rise in fertility rates above age 30 (see Figure 1.4), a substantial rise seems unlikely given present social structures, particularly those relating to employment. These circumstances are also likely to lead to much greater social approbation for couples having only one child or no children by their own choice. This situation is being monitored through the Institute's Australian Family Formation Study.

In the Institute's Family Formation Study of 18-34 year old Australians, 54 per cent of women had already had children or were pregnant with their first baby, 40 per cent said they would like to have a child one day, 2 per cent were unsure whether they ever wanted to have a child, and only 4 per cent said that they never wanted to have a child. The proportions in the latter two categories were similar for men and women. Taking into account children already born to the sample of women and the additional children that they wanted, the final number of children per woman would be about 2.5 on average. Among those who had no children at the time of the survey but said that they wanted to have children sometime, 4 per cent wanted one child, 50 per cent wanted two children, 24 per cent wanted three children, and 22 per cent wanted four or more children. Overall, these results present a picture of a relatively pro-natalist population, certainly pro-natalist relative to the actual fertility levels recorded in recent years.

Respondents were also asked whether they did or whether they would delay children for various reasons. The most prominent reason for delay was to wait until the marriage was established (62 per cent for males and 56 per cent for females). Other important reasons were: until the man had a steady job (58 per cent for males and 47 per cent for females); until they were certain that they had enough money (58 per cent for males and 48 per cent for females); until they had a house or home (49 per cent for men and 43 per cent for females). The sense of security or being established thus weighs highly among the reasons for delaying children. Again, the economic insecurity of the 1970s and the high divorce rate have probably both acted to deter young couples from commencing a family even though most state that they want to have children. We can expect that many of these deferrals will become permanent and that many birth expectations will not be met. Certainly the reality of birth statistics supports this conclusion.

Changing Family and Sex Role Values

Recent demographic trends relating to the family formation process indicate a decline in fertility, a delaying or postponing of children, later marriage age, increasing informal marriage and a rising divorce rate.

Concern is often expressed about these trends and the future of the family. In an endeavour to understand and interpret these trends, the Institute has been studying the values and attitudes of young adults aged 18-34 years, with a view to monitoring sex role and general family related values and how these change over time.

The Institute has been fortunate, thanks to the cooperation of the Department of Demography of the Australian National University, to have access to the 1971 Family Formation Project data. This study contains some identical attitude items to the Institute's Family Formation Study 1982. This enables us to look at changes in family and sex role attitudes and values over the past decade from 1971 to 1982 in comparable samples of 18-34 year old married women.

Some of the findings emerging from the data are reported here:

- the changes in young married women's attitudes over the past decade particularly relating to sex roles;
- on the same attitudes a comparison of married women in 1982 with married men to gauge the conflict or consensus in the area of sex role attitudes;
- a comparison of married and single young adults in 1982 on the same attitudes.

Sex Role and Family Attitudes of Married Women aged 18-34 years: 1971-1982

There have been marked shifts in attitudes relating to sex roles and work, but on some of the more general family related items, remarkably similar levels of agreement are found over the decade, as Figure 1.5 shows.

There is still a strong belief in the idea that one's really important relationships are in one's home, although the percentage agreeing with this view has dropped slightly from 92 per cent in 1971 to 85 per cent in 1982. This suggests strong support for marriage and home in the present day Australian population of marriageable age.

Very little change is seen in the level of agreement (around 40 per cent) to the notion that women are exploited by men. Despite ten years of women's movement rhetoric, wide media coverage of women's issues, debate on women's roles and considerable legislative changes to redress the balance of inequality between the sexes, the same proportion of married women believe women are exploited by men. However, when we look at specific sex role areas such as whether decisions should be made by the husband, there have been significant shifts (44 per cent agreement in 1971 compared with 16 per cent in 1982). One explanation of this may be that ten years ago women had a sense of exploitation or dissatisfaction which they have now defined and can articulate better. It may also be more socially acceptable to acknowledge specific dissatisfactions about women's traditional roles.

In the area of fertility and motherhood as a career, there is little difference over the ten years: more than 60 per cent of women in 1971 and 1982 agree that the pill has done more for women than any other modern invention. Regarding motherhood as a career, there has been a statistically significant shift since 1971. Less than half the 1982 sample agree that motherhood is a woman's most important role. There is even less support for the notion that women can only be fulfilled through motherhood. It would seem that women are broadening their definition of themselves away from the traditional perception of the female role and perhaps expressing a certain level of rejection and dissatisfaction with such role definition.

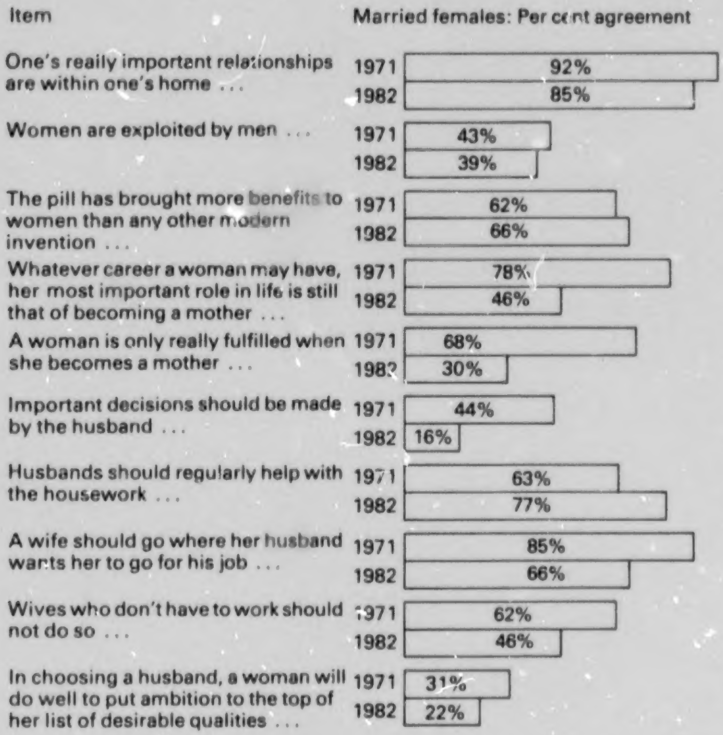
In the area of domestic role sharing and responsibility, there is significantly more support for the notion of males helping with housework and significantly fewer females (only 16 per cent in 1982) regard decision making as a male prerogative. Since increasing numbers of married women are in the workforce, and have thus assumed at least partial if not equal economic responsibility within the marriage, this appears to be a factor encouraging women to expect more shared responsibility in the home.

Moreover, there have been significant shifts in attitudes that relate to work and family. Thus fewer women in 1982 would seek an ambitious husband, and they are less inclined than the 1971 sample to let the husband's job determine where they live. It could be that family and personal life take priority over work, a finding that has been noted in some recent American studies, or it may simply be that women seek equality and expect a greater say in decision making. Just under half the women recognise the value of work for its own sake rather than working because they have to. This appears to fit with the shift in attitude relating to motherhood as a career. Women seem to have broadened their definition of themselves, expect equality in domestic role sharing and are shouldering some of the economic responsibility with their spouse.

Attitude Differences of Married Males and Females aged 18-34 years: 1982

By comparing married males and females in 1982 on the same attitude items, some indication can be obtained of the level of tension between the sexes in these family and sex role areas (Figure 1.6). Our research findings suggest there is little difference between the attitudes of men and women. Both feel that one's really important relationships are in one's

Figure 1.5 Comparison of married women (18-34 year old) in 1971 and 1982 on specific attitude items



home, and men agree that women are exploited by men to the same extent as women do in 1982. Only half the males feel the pill has benefited women more than any other modern invention, but fertility control perhaps affects men less personally.

Men are equally supportive of the proposition that motherhood is not the only career or the most important aspect of a woman's life. They agree more than women that they should help with the housework, although there is not quite as much willingness to give up making the important decisions.

In the area of work and marriage, males are slightly more inclined to agree that women should seek ambitious husbands and less likely than females to feel that a wife should go where her husband wants her to go for his job. However, husbands are more likely to support the notion that wives should only work if they have to, which seems to indicate that husbands appear to regard themselves as the primary breadwinner.

Summing up, these results suggest that there is a shift to more egalitarian sex roles with both young married men and women recognising domestic role sharing and sharing of economic responsibility and a realisation that women need a broader definition of themselves than motherhood. This perhaps augurs well for the future in terms of family relations, although it must be borne in mind that there is no guarantee that espoused attitudes actually influence behaviour.

Differences between Married Males and Females, and Single Males and Females aged 18-34 years: 1982

The single adults are divided into two groups, those still having to live at home with family, and those living away from home, some of whom are in de facto relationships. While married men and women strongly support the idea that one's really important relationships are in one's home, both single groups show less support for this notion (Figure 1.6). This is understandable as young single people are in the process of transition, severing their attachment to their family of origin prior to establishing their own family. Single people are, of course, also more likely to be living alone.

Concerning the importance to women of the contraceptive pill, the three groups are very similar, with females agreeing with this more than males.

The idea that women are exploited by men is more strongly supported by single groups, with females being more in agreement, particularly those who have left home (60 per cent).

Concerning motherhood as a career, there is far less support than in the married groups for the idea that a woman is only really fulfilled when she becomes a mother (around 20 per cent amongst both single groups). Single males living at home are more likely to feel motherhood is a women's most important role in life (55 per cent) whereas only one-third of single males and females who have left home agree with this, an indication of the reality principle operating as other options open up after leaving home.

In the area of domestic responsibility, single females in both groups disagree that important decisions should be made by the husband, and there is around 90 per cent agreement by all singles, that husbands should regularly help with the housework. There are important implications here for the type of marriage relationships likely to be formed later by these young people.

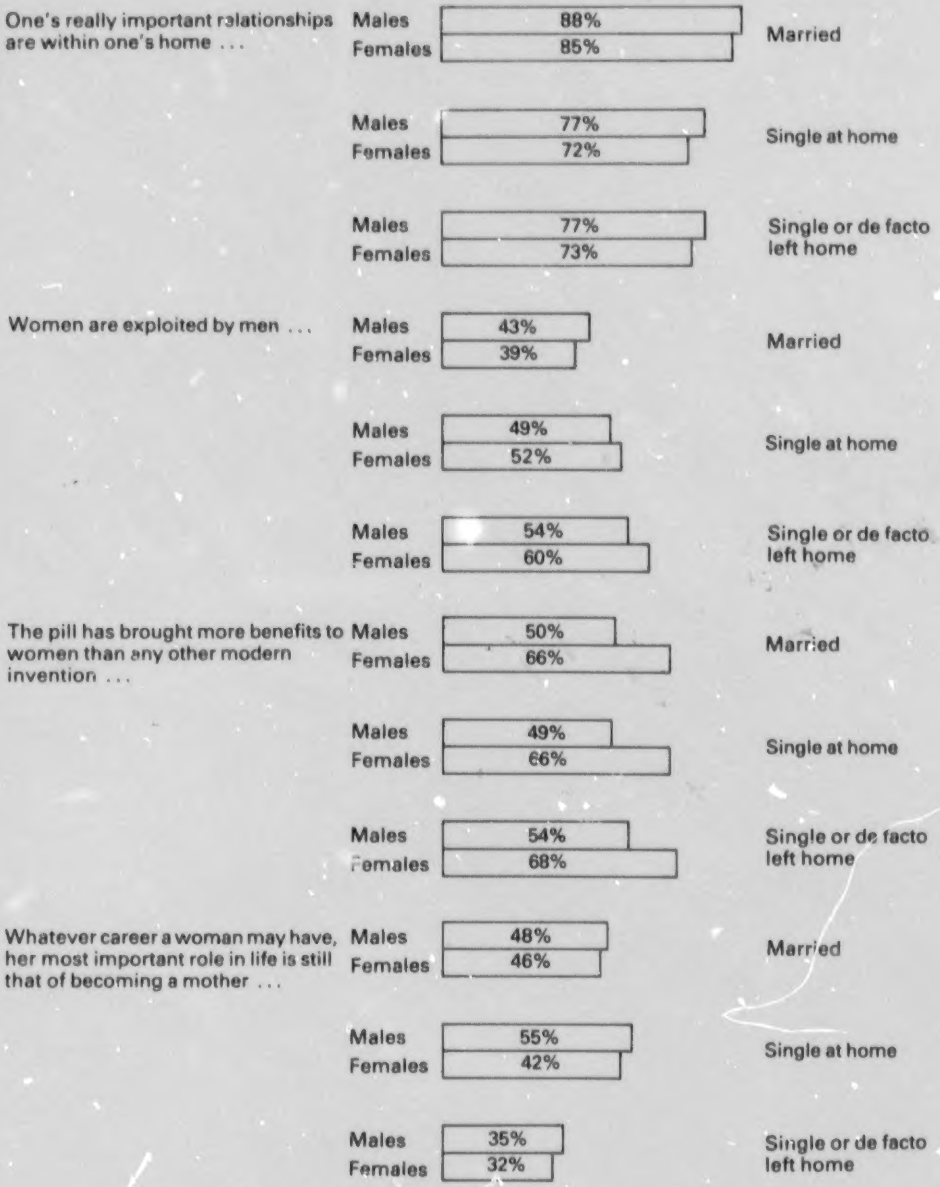
Looking at the area of work and marriage, fewer singles agree that a wife should go where her husband wants her to go for his job, although singles are slightly more likely to feel women should seek ambitious husbands. Singles living at home, particularly males (60 per cent) are more likely to feel that women should only work if they have to.

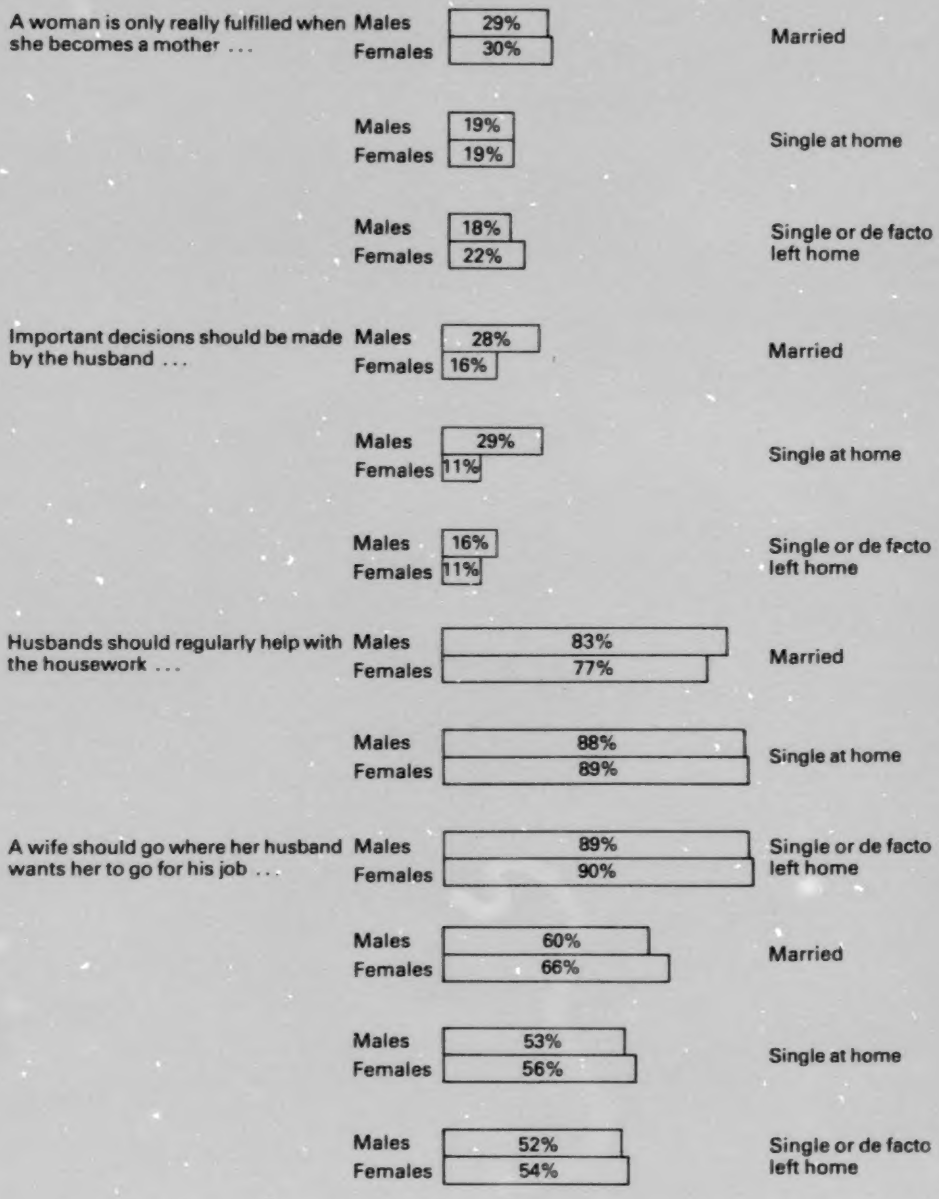
The comparison between young marrieds and singles suggests that singles are less traditional in their sex role values, particularly single women and those singles who have moved away from their family of origin. Whether these results offer a partial explanation for some of the demographic trends noted earlier, that is, increased informal marriage and delaying or postponing of children, remains to be seen. By monitoring the attitude changes of the sample of 18-34 year olds, which the Institute intends to do over the next five years, more will be learnt about the effect of values on the family formation process.

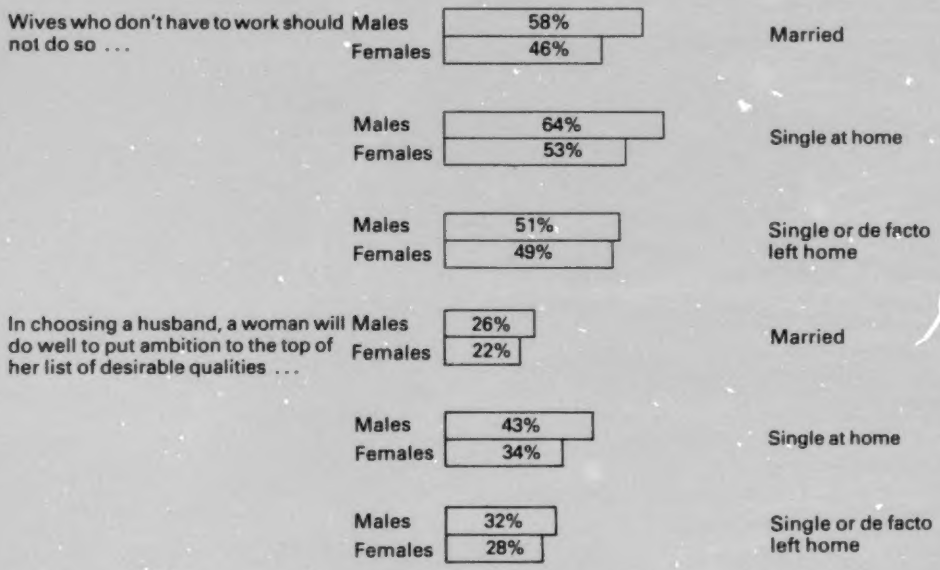
Divorce

Divorce rates in Australia commenced on a gradual upward trend around the mid to late 1960s. The average increase in the number of divorces under the *Matrimonial Causes Act* during the seven years up to 1975 was almost 2000 per year. This gradual rise was interrupted with the introduction of the *Family Law Act* 1975 and in 1976, the number of divorces suddenly peaked at 63 267. The large numbers of divorces occurring in the years 1976-1978 can be accounted for, in part, by the removal of delays in the court process as there was a backlog of cases; by cases that would otherwise have been delayed by the time or 'cause' requirements of the *Matrimonial Causes Act* which were brought forward under the 'no-fault' clause; by couples who had been separated for many years who now decided to

Figure 1.6 Comparison of attitude items for males and females aged 18-34: Married, single at home, single left home




A woman is only really fulfilled when she becomes a mother . . .
Males 29%
Females 30%
Married
Males 19%
Females 19%
Single at home
Males 18%
Females 22%
Single or de facto left home
Important decisions should be made by the husband . . .
Males 28%
Females 16%
Married
Males 29%
Females 11%
Single at home
Males 16%
Females 11%
Single or de facto left home
Husbands should regularly help with the housework . . .
Males 83%
Females 77%
Married
Males 88%
Females 89%
Single at home
A wife should go where her husband wants her to go for his job . . .
Males 89%
Females 90%
Single or de facto left home
Males 60%
Females 66%
Married
Males 53%
Females 56%
Single at home
Males 52%
Females 54%
Single or de facto left home

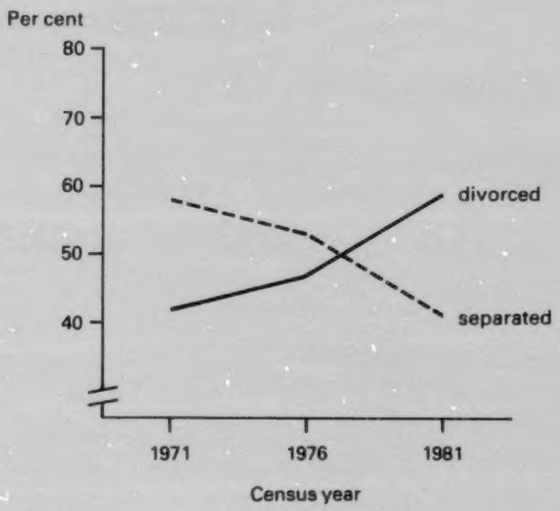


seek a divorce. This last reason accentuates the fact that in interpreting trends in the number of divorces, separations should not be ignored. For example, between the 1971 and 1976 censuses the separated population increased by 64 000 but between 1976 and 1981 the equivalent increase was only 30 000. The shorter time requirement for separations under the *Family Law Act*, the dropping of the need to prove fault, and possibly greater access to social security benefits appear to have both hastened the shift from separation to divorce and to have induced people to divorce who previously may have been content to remain in the 'separated' category. The relative proportions divorced and separated among the combined divorced and separated population in 1971, 1976 and 1981 are shown in Figure 1.7. The shift from separations to divorces is clearly evident. From 1979 onwards, the annual increment in the number of divorces has returned to the level of around 2000 per annum.

A longer term perspective on divorces in Australia is displayed in Figure 1.8. The graph shows an increase in divorce associated with World War II but a subsequent gradual decline during the 1950s and early 1960s. The significance of the 1976 peak is very obvious also. The temporary peak of divorces appears to have passed by the end of 1979 and since that time we have seen a return to the longer-term upward trend in the divorce rate.

The number of divorces in a year is due not only to the number of people who apply for divorce but also to the rate at which the courts are able to process the applications. Generally the extent of backlog of applications to be heard is small, yet even this small backlog may have had some bearing on the relative numbers of divorces in 1982 in New South Wales and Victoria. In that year, the number of divorces granted dropped in New South Wales by about 130 compared to 1981, while in Victoria the number increased by 1500. It is exceedingly unlikely that these very diverse trends were due to specific social or demographic differences between the States. If however, we compare the number of

Figure 1.7 The percentage divorced and the percentage separated among the combined population divorced and separated, Australian Censuses, 1971-1981



divorces granted with the number of applications for divorce during 1982, we find that in New South Wales there were more applications than divorces while in Victoria, the number of divorces granted was somewhat higher than the number of applications. In other words, it appears that during 1982, the court in Victoria went a long way towards clearing a backlog of applications. In interpreting divorce statistics, therefore, we need always to consider the work-load of the courts.

The question most frequently asked about divorce is what percentage of marriages end in divorce. This question is not as simple as it first appears because in actuality it can only be answered in terms of the number of years since couples married. For example, for couples married in 1972, at this point we can only measure the proportion who have divorced within ten years. We can only guess what the extent of divorce will be for these couples for the remainder of their married life. For a more complete picture which might be predictive of overall trends such as the proportion divorcing within 25 years of marriage, we have to look at couples who were married in the mid 1950s. But their experience is very different from those recently married. For example, among couples married in 1954, 14 per cent had divorced within 25 years of marriage, but 16 per cent of those married in 1972 had divorced within 10 years of marriage.

Table 1.4 gives some idea of the proportions of marriages ending in divorce. The figures here show the number of divorces occurring in the first ten years of marriage for couples married in particular years from 1950 onwards. The table also shows the timing of the divorces, that is, whether they occurred in the first five years, in the fifth to the seventh year, or in the eighth to the ninth year after marriage. The final column of this table shows a rise from 3.5 per cent of marriages of the 1950s ending in divorce within ten years to 16 per cent for those married in 1972-1973.

The 1965-1966 year of marriage cohort was the last to complete ten years of marriage prior to the commencement of the *Family Law Act* 1975. It can be noted that this marriage cohort experienced a divorce rate in the first ten years which was close to double that of those

Figure 1.8 Number of divorces per 1000 married women, Australia, 1891-1982

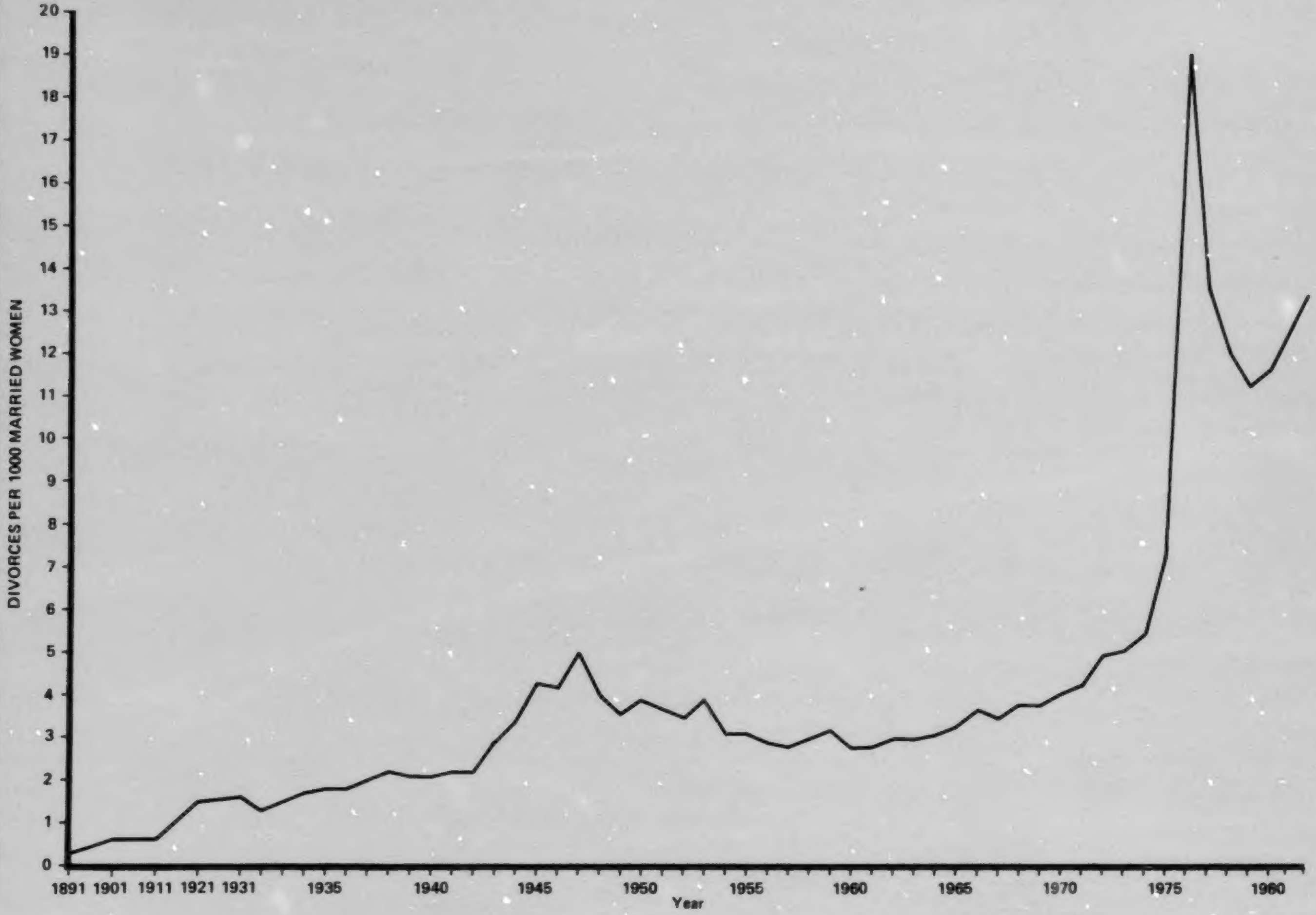


Table 1.4 Number of divorces per 1000 marriages by year of marriage and durations of marriage up to ten years

Year of Marriage (financial years 1 July to 30 June)	*Divorces per 1000 marriages occurring at durations:*			
	0-4 years of marriage	*5-7 years of marriage*	*8-9 years of marriage*	*Total under 10 years*
1950-51	8	16	11	35
1957-58	7	16	12	35
1965-66	12	31	24	67
1966-67	12	35	45	92
1967-68	13	40	55	108
1968-69	14	62	41	117
1969-70	15	76	34	125
1970-71	18	81	35	134
1971-72	43	66	35	144
1972-73	58	63	39	160
1973-74	66	64		
1974-75	69	69		
1975-76	72			
1976-77	76			
1977-78	82			

married in the 1950s. The rise in the divorce rate was therefore well under way by the time the *Family Law Act* came into operation. The temporary impact of this Act is also evident in the rises and subsequent declines in the number of divorces occurring at five to seven years of marriage and at eight to nine years of marriage. The table also shows very clearly that for whatever reasons, the *Family Law Act* has had the effect of bringing divorces further foward in the life of the marriage. Thus the rate of divorce in the first five years of marriage has increased ten-fold between the marriage cohorts of 1957-1958 and 1977-1978. Aside from legislative changes, the increase in the divorce rate under five years of marriage may also be associated with the delay of childbearing within the first years of marriage, and more speculatively but perhaps most importantly, an increasing lack of tolerance of relationships which show early signs of incompatibility. It might also be argued that economic conditions in recent years have placed increased pressure on the husband-wife relationship in the early years of marriage. The choice between loss of income and the birth of a first child is a cruel reality for many Australian couples.

As outlined above, it is not possible to state categorically what proportion of recent marriages will end in divorce. It is possible, however, to *estimate* the proportion of marriages which will end in divorce if the current rates of divorce at each duration of marriage were to apply over a long period of time. This has been done in Table 1.5 on the basis of divorce rates applying in 1982. The table also shows divorce rates in 1982 for those who were married for the first time in comparison with rates for those remarrying after widowhood or divorce.

The first point to be made is that at 1982 rates of divorce, 35 per cent of marriages would be terminated by divorce in the first 25 years of the marriage. As a further 5 per cent or so would terminate beyond 25 years, this means that the 1982 Australian rates imply that about 40 per cent of marriages will end in divorce. It must be stressed that this estimate is

Table 1.5 Percentage of persons divorcing at given durations of marriage, by years of marriage and marital status at the time of marriage, based on divorces in 1982.

		Marital status at time of marriage			
Duration of marriage in years	*Approximate years of marriage (a)*	*Never Married*	*Widowed*	*Divorced*	*Total*
		Males			
Less than 5	1977-81	8.1	6.4	8.8	8.0
5-9	1972-77	10.6	5.8	12.6	10.4
10-14	1967-72	7.7	3.2	7.2	7.2
15-19	1962-67	5.8	2.5	5.3	5.4
20-24	1957-62	4.6	2.7(b)	3.6	4.3
Total(c)		36.8	20.7	37.5	35.3
		Females			
Less than 5	1977-81	8.1	6.4	8.8	8.1
5-9	1972-77	10.4	5.0	13.0	10.5
10-14	1967-72	7.0	3.2	7.6	7.0
15-19	1962-67	5.8	1.6	5.4	5.4
20-24	1957-62	4.3	1.6	3.0	4.1
Total(c)		35.6	17.8	37.8	35.1

Notes: (a) Period is from 1 July in first mentioned year to 30 June in the last, for example, 1 July 1957 to 30 June 1962.
(b) This figure has a low degree of reliability as it is heavily influenced by the rate of mortality.
(c) The total figure is artificial in that it sums percentages which refer to different years of marriage. It can be interpreted as the percentage of marriages which would end in divorce in the first 25 years of marriage if the divorce rates in 1982 applied throughout the life of the marriage.

based on the experience of divorce in one year only, that is, 1982. If, for any reason, divorces tended to be concentrated in 1982 for marriages of all durations, then the measure would be too high. On the other hand, the trend in the annual number of divorces does not strongly suggest that such a concentration did apply in 1982 (as it did in 1976 and 1977), so some confidence can be placed in the estimate.

The rate of around 40 per cent of marriages in Australia ending in divorce (base = 1982) compares with rates of 47 per cent for the United States (base = 1975), 38 per cent for England and Wales (base = 1980-81), and 27 per cent for New Zealand (base = 1980). Trends in other English-speaking countries appear therefore to be following in the wake of the US trends.

The second conclusion to be drawn from the table is that the rate of divorce is similar for those who were marrying for the first time and those who were remarrying after divorce. Divorced persons remarrying had slightly higher rates of divorce in the first 10 years, but lower rates in the subsequent 15 years when compared with people who had married for the first time. This result needs to be interpreted in the context that people married for the first time include a sub-group who would not countenance divorce under any circumstances (for example, because of religious conviction). There are few such people among those remarrying after divorce. The implication is that if we could identify those persons married for the first time who would not countenance divorce under any circumstances and exclude them from the calculation, then the level of divorce would be lower for remarriages than for first marriages.

A study of the situation for whites in the United States, using data from a survey in 1973, showed that the rate of divorce was higher in second marriages than in first marriages. On the other hand, a more recent study of divorce rates in England and Wales in 1980-81 can be used to show that the overall rates of divorce were, as in Australia, almost the same for first marriages and remarriages. It may be that the situation has changed since the earlier US studies. In Australia and also in New Zealand, the recent upsurge of divorces has been accompanied by a decline in the rate of remarriage (Table 1.6). The reasons for this decline are presently unknown, but speculatively there are several possibilities. In the Institute's Family Formation Study of 18-34 year old Australians, among those divorced persons who said that they did not wish to marry again, the main reason given was disillusionment with marriage. In addition, remarriage rates may have dropped because cohabiting or visiting relationships with a new partner now receive a degree of social sanction; or because of agreements or orders in respect of property and maintenance, or the receipt of social security benefits are often dependent upon the person not remarrying; or perhaps because it is difficult for some divorced persons to start a relationship with a new partner. It might be presumed, therefore, that those remarrying from the new group of divorces have a stronger commitment both to their new partner and to marriage itself than was the case among divorced persons remarrying in earlier years. This may be part of the explanation as to why in recent years the rate of divorce for remarriages has not been higher than that for first marriages. It should be remembered, however, that this argument is set in terms of the relative levels of divorce for first marriages and remarriages and the change in these relative levels over time. In absolute terms, Table 1.5 shows that divorced persons remarrying have a 40 per cent chance of divorcing again. This tends to refute the viewpoint that divorce will produce better quality second marriages.

The lower divorce rate for widowed persons remarrying is almost certainly related to their greater age. Widowed persons remarrying are on average about 30 years older than people marrying for the first time.

A final point to note from Table 1.5 is that the risk of a subsequent divorce is the same for men remarrying after divorce as for women remarrying after divorce.

From 1975 to 1982, a total of 413 706 children aged less than 18 were involved in divorce. Table 1.6 shows the numbers of children whose parents divorced and the percentage distribution of divorces according to the number of children involved for each year from 1975 to 1982. About 36-39 per cent of all divorces involve no children under the age of 18.

The Institute is presently sponsoring a major study of divorce rates for different groups within the Australian population being conducted by Virginia Joesphian of the Australian National University.

Widowhood

With a great deal of attention having been focused on divorce in Australia in recent years, there is a tendency to pass over the fact that in any one year more marriages are ended by death than by divorce. For example, in 1981, over 51 000 marriages were ended by the death of one of the partners. This compares with 41 000 divorces in the same year. Further, at the 1981 Census, there were almost twice as many widowed persons as there were divorced persons. Of course, most of the widowings occur at relatively late ages so that the total number of dependent children who have a parent die will certainly be less than the number whose parents divorce. Unfortunately, however, there are in fact no direct statistics available of the number of dependent children who have one or both parents die, although social security statistics provide information on widows who receive the Widow's Pension.

Table 1.6 Divorces, total numbers of children aged less than 18 and percentage distribution, Australia, 1975-1982

	Number of Children							*Total*
Year	*0*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6+*	*Children*
1975	32.4	22.5	24.9	12.5	5.2	1.6	0.9	34 992
1976	37.3	23.3	22.8	10.7	4.0	1.2	0.6	73 645
1977	36.3	23.2	24.4	10.8	3.7	1.1	0.5	57 878
1978	36.9	22.5	24.7	10.7	3.8	1.1	0.4	51 599
1979	38.7	21.6	25.1	10.2	3.3	0.8	0.3	46 130
1980	39.4	21.4	25.2	9.9	3.0	0.7	0.3	46 836
1981	38.9	21.5	25.6	10.0	3.0	0.7	0.3	49 616
1982	38.4	21.6	26.2	10.3	2.7	0.6	0.2	53 010

Statistics of dependent children are available for divorces. The Institute is making representations about the deficiency in published death statistics to the statistical agencies involved.

Although the mortality level in Australia has continued its long-term decline, widowhood before the age of 50 is by no means a rare event as it still occurs for women in 10 per cent of all marriages and for men in about 4 per cent. In the rush to deal with the situation of the divorced, the difficulties faced by those widowed at young ages should not be overlooked.

The Institute commissioned a paper on widowhood and its impact on children from Dr Linda Rosenman and Dr Art Schulman who conducted a large study in 1981. The paper shows that the problems of coping with and adjusting to the loss of a parent, decreased family income and its associated social problems, are similar to those resulting from divorce. Family support and/or welfare benefits are also equally important in this circumstance.

Widowhood remains, however, primarily a phenomenon of the aged. Almost 70 per cent of widowed persons are aged 65 and over. In addition, because of the lower mortality of women and the age difference of husbands and wives, widowhood is very much more likely to be experienced by women than by men. Around 70 per cent of married women now survive their husbands in comparison with about 60 per cent around the turn of the century. This results in there being about four and a half times as many widowed women in Australia as there are widowed men. The average duration of widowhood is declining, however, because of the increased survival chances of both spouses. A widowed woman on average can expect about 17 years of widowhood compared to about 12 years for a widowed man.

One of the more important changes in relation to widowhood has been in the nature of the period preceding widowhood. Longer survival, earlier childbearing and earlier departure of children from the parental home have all combined to produce a situation where a married couple can expect to live together for a much longer time after all of their children have left home. It is likely that this situation has often led to the development of a life style among such couples in which almost all aspects of the life of one partner revolve around the other partner. In such circumstances, the loss through death of one of the partners of this most intimate relationship can be very traumatic.

Remarriages

With the rapid increase in the number of divorced persons of a relatively young age combined with the substantial delay of first marriage by younger people, a new older

Table 1.7 Number of remarriages of widowed and divorced persons per 1000 of the mid-year population widowed and divorced

Age Group	*Remarriages per 1000 population widowed and divorced*					
	Males			*Females*		
	1971	*1976*	*1981*	*1971*	*1976*	*1981*
20-24	152	253	194	309	310	232
25-29	326	348	244	280	283	196
30-34	275	299	208	165	207	140
35-39	184	241	168	104	139	99
40-44	130	185	129	69	96	72
45-49	90	139	100	43	64	47

market for potential partners has emerged. As a result, both the number and proportion of remarriages have increased markedly in recent years. The number of marriages involving at least one partner who had been previously married rose from 20 000 in 1975 to 38 000 in 1982 or, in percentage terms, from 19 per cent of all marriages to 32 per cent. Most of this percentage rise occurred in fact in just one year, 1976.

Among divorced persons, about the same number of women as men remarried during 1982 (24 429 men, 22 852 women) and there was very little difference between the sexes in whether they married a single person (44 per cent for men, 41 per cent for women), a widowed person (6 per cent for both sexes), or another divorced person (50 per cent for men, 53 per cent for women). This relative degree of equivalence between the sexes did not extend, however, to the relative ages of husbands and wives. Among those aged 35-39 for whom the majority of marriages are remarriages, 31 per cent of women married a man under age 35 compared to 71 per cent of men marrying a woman under 35. To some extent this may reflect availability as women divorcing are on average 2-3 years younger than men divorcing.

It is important to appreciate that the increasing proportion that remarriages constitute of all marriages does not necessarily imply that divorced persons are now more likely to remarry. It may simply be due to the fact that there are now comparatively more divorced persons available for remarriage. Indeed the evidence in Table 1.7 suggests that rates of remarriage have declined substantially in recent years.

As discussed above, this would suggest that the new wave of divorces has brought with it, for whatever reasons, a greater reluctance to remarry. This conclusion, however, must remain somewhat tentative pending the results of the Institute's on-going research of remarriages according to the length of time since the dissolution of the previous marriage — a method of analysis more easily interpreted than the rates shown in Table 1.6. To this end, upon the Institute's request, the Australian Bureau of Statistics has agreed to recommence detailed coding on a national basis of information on remarriages obtained on the Notice of Intended Marriage.

2

Family Law

Family Dissolution and Reformation Study 34
Information Collection in the Melbourne Registry 39
Court Forms 40
The Interests of Children: Section 63 Survey 41
Conciliation in the Court: Regulation 96 Analysis 43
Maintenance and Property Issues: the Need for Further Studies 43
Court Data on Property and Maintenance 44
Evaluation Study: Pilot Project to Provide a Supervised Access-Changeover Centre 45
Policy Paper: Legal Status and Family Relationship of Children in Step-Families 46
Research Project on the Long Term Adjustment of Relinquishing Mothers in Adoption 46

Few areas of law have as much impact on the lives of Australian adults and children as do laws relating to marriage breakdown. Between 1976 and 1982 a total of nearly 312 000 divorces were granted. The number of people divorced during this period is of course twice the number of divorces granted. In the same period 378 714 dependent children were involved in marriages which ended in divorce.

The Institute sees family law studies in broad terms and as encompassing all those laws which have an impact on family relationships and family functioning. The *Family Law Act*, its operation and the ramifications of its orders have been a primary focus, but laws relating to marriage, adoption, child welfare and de facto relationships are also relevant.

The provisions and presumed effect of legislation affecting the family are not looked at in a vacuum. The policies inherent in such laws and arising out of their operation must always be the very basis of family law studies.

The *Family Law Act* provisions regarding maintenance and the distribution of property on or after divorce have ramifications which affect not only the divorcing people themselves but also the state. Because of the inability or refusal of people to support their former spouses and/or dependent children, the divorced are frequently recipients of social security pensions and benefits. An example of how statutory requirements in one area can affect those in another area occurred last year. In November 1982, the then Minister for Social Security re-activated a statutory requirement that applicants for Widow's Pension and Supporting Parent's Benefit should take reasonable steps to obtain maintenance. Critics of this re-activation said it would cause unwarranted anxiety for women who were afraid of revealing their whereabouts to their husbands, or who were unaware of their husband's whereabouts. It would produce an increase in applications for legal aid and an increase in unnecessary litigation, as a percentage of men themselves would be on benefits or a low weekly wage. In addition, it was argued, that as only South Australia and Western Australia currently have an efficient maintenance enforcement agency, the obtaining of an order is too frequently no guarantee that maintenance will be paid. The re-activation requirement was consequently terminated in May 1983.

The *Family Law Act* has attracted considerable interest from Parliament, as evidenced by the Joint Select Committee (which reported to the Parliament in August 1980), the recent

Table 2.1 Children of divorce

Year	*% cases involving children*	*Total number of children involved*	*Total dissolutions*
1971	67.5	18 451	13 002
1972	66.8	22 172	15 707
1973	67.7	23 078	16 266
1974	68.3	25 505	17 744
1975	67.6	34 992	24 307
1976	62.7	73 645	63 267
1977	63.7	57 878	45 150
1978	63.1	51 599	40 608
1979	61.3	46 130	37 854
1980	60.6	46 836	39 258
1981	61.1	49 616	41 412
1982	61.6	53 010	44 088

establishment of the Matrimonial Property Inquiry (June 1983) and a Departmental Inquiry into Maintenance Enforcement (set up in March 1983). An extensive amendment Bill is presently before the Parliament. In addition, the Institute and the Family Law Council (both established under the *Family Law Act*) report annually to Parliament.

The public and the media frequently express interest in topics such as the causes of marriage breakdown, its effect on children and the problems associated with financial support and division of matrimonial property after separation. The Institute's Family Information Centre receives many queries each week on these and similar topics from a range of people and organisations.

The Institute is well aware of and shares the concern expressed in the community about the frequency, causes and effects of marriage breakdown and its associated issues. It is also well aware of, but does not accept, the argument that the *Family Law Act* by itself has increased marriage breakdown and altered the nature of marriage.

The divorce rate is not a reflection of the rate of marriage breakdown in a particular society, just as the absence of divorce (for example, in Ireland) is not an indicator of marital stability. Even where divorce is readily available, people may not choose legally to terminate a marriage which is one in name only, or may not even be aware of the details of divorce legislation. In his 1977-78 study Ozdowski found that nearly 75 per cent of the 313 people he surveyed had limited or no knowledge about the *Family Law Act*, despite the extensive media coverage which accompanied the passage of the Act in 1975. Those who had a general knowledge were those with high social standing, while a more detailed knowledge was associated with people who had separated or divorced or who came across family issues in the course of their work. While accepting that the passage of the Act led to a short term increase in the divorce rate, Ozdowski expected this to be temporary in nature.

The *Family Law Act* legally terminates a marriage after a minimum period of 12 months' separation. In its narrowest sense a divorce decree changes the legal status of a man and a woman and enables them to remarry.

The *Family Law Act* was born out of dissatisfaction with the *Matrimonial Causes Act* 1959 which permitted divorce if one of the 14 grounds (11 of which were based on matrimonial fault) could be proved. Senator Missen, in his second reading speech on the then Family Law Bill (Hansard 29 October 1974, 2033) spoke of his practical experience with the fault sections of the *Matrimonial Causes Act*:

> . . . it is very difficult to find a person who can be described as the innocent party in a divorce. We go through a charade of trying to establish guilt; of trying to establish that some person is reponsible. I suggest that we do this to no real purpose. In fact, in most cases it is a matter of some sort of incompatibility that has led to the breakdown of the marriage, it is not a matter of one person being at fault. There are no or very few innocent parties in any complete sense. Those who have endeavoured in the past to obtain a divorce in a decent civilised fashion, who have separated and made arrangements have found themselves either waiting many years or unable to divorce on a ground which exists at present. It is an exercise in futility and an exercise in creating animosities that we continue to retain that type of requirement of fault.

At present the divorce rate is increasing slowly — there is certainly not an escalating divorce rate as some commentators maintain.

Table 2.2 shows the number of divorces and the crude divorce rate for two selected years prior to the passage of the *Family Law Act* and for the years 1976-1982.

Over the same period the number of marriages registered had slightly increased, an increase which is due to some extent to an increase in remarriages.

However, as Chapter 1 of this report discusses, the Australian remarriage rate has recently declined quite substantially, as it has done in the United States and the United Kingdom.

Table 2.2 Divorces

	Divorces	*Crude divorce rate (per 10 000 population)*	*Median duration of marriages(a) (yrs)*	*% Divorced <5 years after marriage(b)*
1966	9 921	8	13.9	7.9
1971	13 002	10	12.1	9.3
1975	24 307	18	11.6	9.9
1976	63 267	46	11.0	15.5
1979	37 854	26	10.3	20.1
1981	41 412	28	10.2	20.8
1982	44 088	29	10.4	20.3

Notes: (a) Duration of marriage is duration to date of divorce

(b) Prior to 1976 the Matrimonial Causes Act required 5 years separation as the minimum for 'no-fault' divorce. 'Fault' divorce could be obtained in a shorter time. After January 1976, the sole requirement became 12 months separation

Table 2.3 Marriages

		% Remarriages (previously divorced & widowed)	
Year	*Marriages N*	*Bridegroom*	*Bride*
1966	96 046	9.3	9.6
1971	117 637	9.7	9.6
1975	103 973	15.5	13.4
1976	109 973	21.0	20.5
1979	104 396	23.1	22.5
1981	113 905	23.2	22.5
1982	117 275	23.4	22.6

Note: In 1982 remarriage of widows and widowers was approximately three per cent of all marriages

Family Dissolution and Reformation Study

Staff members have nearly finished writing up the results of the Institute's first study of divorced people (Family Dissolution/Reformation Study). This involves analyses of interviews obtained from 295 (171 men and 124 women) randomly selected people who were divorced in 1979 through the Melbourne, Parramatta and Perth Family Courts. Some interesting characteristics of the process of marriage breakdown, people's progress through the court system and their reactions to the ending of their marriage have emerged. One feature is that women appear to be playing a more decisive role than men, both as regards the decision to separate and in starting divorce proceedings.

For example, 45 per cent of men interviewed said they had not thought of separating from their former wives, although many described bitter areas of conflict and periods of unhappiness in the marriage. A lower percentage of women in the sample (22 per cent) said separation was not considered by them.

Twenty-six per cent of men said they had initiated the separation and 61 per cent said their former wives had been the initiators. When we spoke to women, 67 per cent said the separation decision had been theirs and 30 per cent said their husbands had made the decision. Mutual separations were rare and were reported by only 14 per cent of the sample, with men and women reporting nearly the same proportion.

We were interested in the extent to which people reconciled after an intitial separation. Forty per cent of the sample resumed cohabitation at least once. For 40 people, between two and six reconciliations occurred.

We asked our respondents when they first thought the marriage was going wrong, and Table 2.4 sets out their answers to this question. Excluding those who saw no difficulties and for whom the marriage breakdown occurred suddenly (n=35), over 26 per cent of people said the marriage began to break down within its first twelve months, and an additional 14 per cent said the major difficulties manifested themselves in the second year. However, separation rarely occcurred at the same time as marriage problems were recognised and, as Ailsa Burns' study in 1980 shows, many people remain in unhappy marriages for considerable periods of time.

Our research suggests that the presence or absence of children affected the extent to which people physically remained together. In 75 per cent of childless marriages the final separation occurred within 5 years of the marriage — where there were children only 14 per cent of people separated within this period of time.

Many respondents whose children were young when it became obvious that their marriages were deteriorating said they feared that a separation would cause disruption for the children. Others (mainly women) said they had nowhere to go and remained in the marriage until alternative accommodation was acquired or a job could be found and some 'escape money' saved.

A question commonly asked of divorced people is what caused them to divorce — or, more accurately, what caused them to separate so that divorce became legally possible 12 months later. We therefore asked respondents what made them first think about separating. A high proportion (35 per cent) said they had not thought of separating. For the remaining people, the major group of reasons were those to do with problems with the relationship. These included reports of lack of communication with the other partner, feeling neglected and/or unloved and constant squabbling and bickering.

Table 2.4 When men and women in the sample first felt the marriage was going wrong (% and number of respondents)

Timing	*Men* %	*Women* %	*Total* %
Did not	13.0 (22)	8.9 (11)	11.3 (35)
Up to 3 months	5.3 (9)	12.2 (15)	8.2 (24)
4-12 months	12.4 (21)	18.7 (23)	15.1 (44)
13 months-2 years	10.7 (18)	15.4 (19)	12.7 (37)
3-4 years	12.4 (21)	5.7 (7)	9.6 (28)
5-9 years	24.9 (42)	24.4 (30)	24.7 (72)
10-14 years	9.5 (16)	9.8 (12)	9.6 (28)
15-19 years	7.7 (13)	3.3 (4)	5.8 (17)
20+ years	4.1 (7)	1.6 (2)	3.1 (9)
Total respondents	57.9 (169)	42.1 (123)	100.0 (292) 3 missing

The second group of reasons included reports of incompatibility produced by changing values or attitudes of either partner, exposure to new ideas and people which produced a realisation that there was an alternative to the marriage. These responses were coded together and 28 per cent of respondents mentioned one or other of them.

The third most common reason given for separation was infidelity, with 26 per cent of respondents including it in their response to this question. Many respondents gave several reasons and included infidelity together with relationship problems and spouse personality problems. Some said that meeting someone new had induced them to leave and, for some, marriage or cohabitation resulted from this relationship.

Specific faults in the former spouse's personality was a commom response given, and largely a female response. Violent behaviour, drinking and gambling were the major faults mentioned.

A smaller percentage of responses referred to external pressures placed on the marriage which were said to have brought it to an end. The illness of either partner or a child, over-involvement with work and in-law interference were given as examples of such pressures.

We asked our respondents how they felt about the Family Court and why they felt that way about it. We received a wide range of answers to these questions. Fifteen per cent of people said they had had no or only minimal contact with the court and felt unable to express an opinion, and another 15 per cent of people gave mixed or ambivalent responses. As this was a multiple response question, many respondents gave several reasons for their attitude towards the court. The remaining group (n = 207) gave one or more reasons why they were totally positive about the court or critical of it.

As Table 2.6 shows, critical comments exceeded positive ones and a higher proportion of men than women were negative about the court. The age of the respondent expressing his or

Table 2.5 Reasons given by men and women for first deciding to separate

	Men	*Women*	*Total*
Reasons	% *n*	% *n*	% *n*
Interpersonal Relationship (lack of love, arguments, no communication)	44.2 (38)	36.5 (35)	40.1 (73)
Grew apart	7.0 (6)	8.3 (8)	7.7 (14)
Things wouldn't change	26.7 (23)	28.1 (27)	27.5 (50)
Infidelity	30.2 (26)	22.3 (21)	25.8 (47)
Personality (alcoholism, violence)	2.3 (2)	28.1 (27)	15.9 (29)
External pressures (work, in-laws, illness)	8.1 (7)	6.3 (6)	7.1 (13)
Other	9.3 (8)	14.6 (14)	12.1 (22)
Respondents	86 (110)	94 (138)	182 (248) (103 did not decide — 16 missing)

Table 2.6 Family Court attitudes expressed by all men and women in the sample

	Men		*Women*		*Total*	
Response	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*
Positive only	25.7	(44)	35.5	(44)	29.8	(88)
Negative only	45.0	(77)	33.9	(42)	40.3	(119)
Little/no contact	15.2	(26)	15.3	(19)	15.3	(45)
Ambivalent	14.1	(24)	15.3	(19)	14.6	(43)
Total	100.0	(171)	100.0	(124)	100.0	(295)

her opinion about the Family Court was relevant to the frequency of reports of positive or negative attitudes. For example, men aged 35-44 years at the time of the interview (respondents were interviewed two years after divorce) were more frequently negative than were younger or older men. Factors affecting their criticisms were the cost of proceedings, the making of ancillary orders and criticisms about lawyers. For women, the incidence of negative comment increased with age, women under 45 years when interviewed being more frequently positive than negative about the court, a trend which was reversed at the oldest age group. Women's attitudes did not appear to be influenced by their court experience or usage, but cluster analysis performed on the sample indicated that economic vulnerability was associated with negative court attitudes. That is, women who said the marriage breakdown led to economic difficulties (who were likely to be older women) reported a high incidence of negative court comments.

Separation from a spouse, of course, produces major upheavals in people's lives and requires adjustment to new living arrangements, exposure to tasks rarely previously performed, and a new status of 'single' person. Separation also can mean a variety of different things for different people. It can represent a sudden, unexpected loss, or the inevitable outcome of years of conflict and dissatisfaction. It can be the beginning of a major readjustment period for both parties and children, of loneliness or new-found freedom. Separation may also be viewed as evidence of unfulfilment; the defeat of earlier expectations of having a successful marriage.

In order to gauge reactions to the separation we asked respondents to describe how they felt about the first separation and (where more than one occurred) to the final separation. Symptoms of distress predominated in the descriptions of reactions to the separation. Distress in itself included shock, depression, hostility, anxiety, loss of self-confidence or self-esteem, feeling lonely, worried or confused.

Overall, the majority of respondents (74 per cent) describe negative feelings only, 17 per cent said they felt much better after the separation, 6 per cent reported mixed reactions and 3 per cent said they reacted in a neutral manner.

Women more frequently reported positive feelings than did men, however the majority of people interviewed said they were upset by the separation.

Circumstances surrounding the separation, including who instigated it and how suddenly it occurred, were also relevant to people's reactions. As mentioned previously, fewer men than women were involved in the decision to separate and more men than women said they had never thought of separating and indeed had not thought the marriage was going wrong. This may well account for the smaller proportion of men than women reporting positive reactions to the separation.

Twenty-six per cent of respondents interviewed had remarried by the time of their interview, which occurred approximately two years after the divorce. One respondent had remarried his former wife and four people said they had already separated from their 'new' spouse. Several respondents reported that they would be remarrying within days or weeks of the interview. An additional 11 per cent of respondents were living in a de facto relationship.

Those who had not remarried were asked whether they would consider remarrying, expected to — or never want to remarry. Only 11 per cent said they would not remarry.

When we interviewed them, just over one in five of our divorced people were living alone and the majority of these were men — in fact, as Table 2.7 shows, more men were living alone. By contrast, nearly half the women were living with children and no other adult. Less than half the households contained a child or children of the person interviewed, and 102 people (nearly all men) said they had children living with an ex-spouse. A small number of households contained stepchildren and children of a de facto spouse.

The Institute's Family Dissolution/Reformation Study has yielded a considerable amount of information about the many and varied experiences of a group of people whose marriages ended in divorce in 1979.

Several other family law studies have been directed, in a broad sense, at the operation of the *Family Law Act*.

Unfortunately, the emotive aspects of marriage breakdown frequently cause people to take extreme stands when discussing the effectiveness of the *Family Law Act*, the Family Court and its staff. There have recently been several sensational anecdotal and quite possibly inaccurate portrayals of the Family Court in the media. In the absence of objective 'hard' data (e.g., on maintenance awards, custody outcomes and property divisions) the Institute and also the Attorney-General are unable to correct inaccuracies — it is, of course, difficult also to identify just what information *is* inaccurate. Our studies are aimed at filling that information gap.

The *Family Law Act* was passed in 1975 but the final decision to proceed with establishing the Family Court of Australia was not taken until the change of government following the December 1975 election. The process of setting up the various court registries was, as a

Table 2.7 Living arrangements of men and women at the time of interview

	Men		*Women*	
How living	*n*	%	*n*	%
Alone	51	30	11	9
With spouse (alone)	17	10	4	3
With spouse and children	28	16	18	15
With de facto (alone)	8	5	4	3
With de facto and children	12	7	9	7
With children	20	12	60	48
With children and blood relatives	3	2	8	7
With relatives, no children	21	12	6	5
With other adults	11	6	4	3
	171	100	124	100

Note: The children may be children of the dissolved marriage or of a pre- or post- divorce marriage or relationship.

result, characterised by political uncertainty, the difficulties of new staff operating under new legislation in a new jurisdiction, extraordinary demand pressures generated by the volume of applications (inflated by the large number of applications held over by couples awaiting the new, no fault, 12 months separation system) and an exceedingly short time span before the new court opened its doors.

Appropriately, the main objective of the court was to meet quickly the demand for its services in accordance with the principles underlying the *Family Law Act*. It is not surprising then that information about the operation of the Act is limited and that the court's record-keeping system was set up to meet legal and administrative purposes rather than research or policy purposes.

Further, the Institute of Family Studies (although established by the *Family Law Act*) did not begin operation until 1980, so it was not available to advise on the broader information needs that would arise from the Act's operation.

Information Collection in the Melbourne Registry

A paper describing the progress of 1981 Melbourne Family Court hearings was prepared by several members of the Institute staff during the year. The paper has been published in the Institute's Occasional Paper series. The data on which the analysis has been based were collected by Melbourne court staff and involved the coding of court hearings based on the daily law list. There were 21034 hearings analysed for 1981 which were tabulated by whether they were defended or not and by category of outcome, e.g., divorce, custody or maintenance. Not all hearings could be coded — the data exclude hearings from country circuits and some where hearings later than 1981 were involved.

Analysis at the Institute showed that 35 per cent of all 1981 hearings were divorce only matters and 86 per cent of *all* coded hearings (including divorces) were undefended. Formal arrangements for children were the subject of 18.7 per cent of all orders made, with 11.4 per cent being custody orders and 7.3 per cent being orders relating to access by the non-custodial parent. Mothers obtained custody far more frequently than fathers. In 68 per cent of custody hearings, custody went to the mother, in 13.6 per cent to the father. Joint custody accounted for 18.1 per cent of those hearings, with third party (intervenors) being given custody in only 0.2 per cent of hearings.

Disputes over the matrimonial home and other assets which accumulate during a marriage are a characteristic of many marriage breakdowns. In 1981, 22 per cent of all Melbourne hearings (excluding those relating to divorce) involved a property order, and nearly 80 per cent of these were Section 87 orders. These involve the settlement of property and maintenance claims in an agreement to which the husband and wife are parties. The agreement has no legal effect until it is sanctioned by the judge who must consider that its contents are 'proper' in the circumstances. A Section 87 agreement is a final agreement between the parties on those issues, and acts in substitution of further rights.

Maintenance orders were rare and accounted for only 9 per cent of the 1981 non-divorce hearings. Just under 30 per cent of maintenance orders were undefended. It must be remembered that both Section 87 orders and maintenance orders are frequently dealt with in the Magistrates Courts and these would not be recorded in a study of Family Court orders.

The analysis of the 1981 Melbourne registry outcomes data demonstrates that a number of issues can be resolved if the information at hand is tabulated by the Family Court. However, even the system operating in Melbourne does not fill all the gaps. For example, it is not possible to determine the common amounts awarded for the maintenance of children. Unfortunately, it is not even possible to separate out the orders for the maintenance of a spouse from orders for the maintenance of children.

The other serious limitation is that the collection of data in the form described in the Occasional Paper is still limited to the Melbourne registry and even there a considerable amount of time and money was required from the Institute to enable the information to be computerised and analysed.

Court Forms

The forms used by clients of the Family Court or their solicitors when they apply for divorce or ancillary relief are currently being reconsidered by the Judges Rules Committee. The Institute has for some time been concerned at the inadequacy of information available regarding the socio-economic characteristics of Family Court users, trends in marriage and divorce behaviour and the household composition of divorcing families. Questions which impinge on these areas are frequently asked but rarely answerable. Current Australian Bureau of Statistics data do not go beyond broad demographic characteristics.

Institute staff have met at different times with judges and other members of the Family Court and with representatives of the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The Family Law Council has also been involved in discussions. Agreement has been reached by all interested parties that some additional items will be added to the existing divorce application form.

These will include (together with reasons for their inclusion):

- Inclusion of occupation of both husband and wife at the time of separation. (At present only the occupation of the applicant at the time of filing is required). It is important to record the occupation of *both* applicant and respondent, so as to have consistent and comparable indicators of the socio-economic status of the marriage.

  Are certain socio-economic groupings over/under-represented in the group which divorces relative to their numbers in the population as a whole? These data would be valuable in investigating the relationship between separation and socio-economic status.

- Inclusion of details regarding (1) in the case of a church wedding, the denomination; (2) in the case of a civil wedding, whether performed by civil celebrant or registry official.

  At present ABS collects such material for its marriage but not divorce statistics. The additional information is available on the marriage certificate which must be lodged when a Form 4 or Form 6 (whichever is first) is currently filed.

- Additional details regarding previous marriages of applicant and respondent. At present the collected statistics only give the marital status of the parties prior to the relevant marriage.

  The current trend is towards serial marriage — the proportion of people remarrying within 5 years of divorce is about 80 per cent. The figures currently collected only give a partial picture — there are undoubtedly people whose marriages are ending in divorce now, who have previously been married and will marry again. The 1982 divorce figures show that 10.3 per cent of men and women divorcing in that year had been previously divorced. Although such cases are still quite rare they are expected to increase as the divorce experience widens.

  As the age ranges in which the divorce rates are highest are 25-29 for women and 30-36 for men, it is quite possible that third and even subsequent marriages might occur in a lifetime.

- Address of the parties at the time of separation. This is an additional indicator of socio-economic status (together with occupation) and such information will give a picture of areas experiencing high/low marital breakdown rates. This in turn will be useful when decisions are made regarding the allocation of marriage counselling services etc.
- Sex of children in addition to their dates of birth. This information is of particular interest when looking at proposed arrangements for children.
- Number of offspring of the marriage who would have been children of the marriage except that at the time of filing they were over 18 years.

  This would be the only definite indicator of whether a marriage ending in separation/divorce was really childless or not. Current information only records details of children under 18 (because, of course, these children are included in the court's jurisdiction). However, many research questions are asked about the connection (if any) between childlessness and divorce and the impact of large families on marriage breakdown. As currently collected, the Australian Bureau of Statistics data on a family involving children aged (say) 8, 13, 17, 19 and 21 would indicate that three children were born to the separated parties, yet the older offspring may have been instrumental in bringing about the divorce or in supporting the family after divorce.
- Relationship of children to the applicant and respondent. At present the Family Court only has the power to make orders which affect children of the marriage, who are defined as children born to both husband and wife or adopted by them. Children who are excluded from this definition comprise those born to either the husband or wife in a previous relationship or marriage, foster children and children born as a result of artificial insemination by donor. The *Family Law Amendment Bill* has as one of its major amendments the extension of the definition of children of the marriage to include those mentioned above. However, to assist both court staff and research it is necessary that the relationship of children to both adults be stipulated in court documents.

As well as being expanded, the divorce application form will be re-designed to suit the computerised record-keeping procedures which are planned for the Family Court. The amount of information collected via the application for ancillary relief form will be slightly increased. In cases where an ancilliary relief form is filed and later a divorce application form relating to the same marriage is filed, all information from both forms (and any subsequent ones) will be matched up on the court computer. It is hoped that the amendments to existing court forms will extend the amount of information collected and that this information will serve the needs of the Family Court, the Institute of Family Studies and the Family Law Council.

The Interests of Children: Section 63 Survey

During 1982 the Institute of Family Studies surveyed the operation of the Family Court in respect of Section 63 of the *Family Law Act*. The results of the survey were published in the Occasional Paper series.

Section 63 provides that a decree nisi does not become absolute unless the Family Court has declared that it is satisfied either that:

- there are no children of the marriage under 18, or that
- where there are such children proper arrangements in all the circumstances have been made for their welfare, or
- there are circumstances by reason of which the decree nisi should become absolute, notwithstanding that the court is not satisfied that proper arrangements have been made.

The study involved a request to all Family Court judges that they complete a short questionnaire whenever a Section 63 matter came before them during the month of September, 1982.

The questionnaire was designed to measure:

- the extent to which enquiries were made regarding the welfare of children in a divorce application;
- the sufficiency or otherwise of information given;
- the extent to which counselling services were used to remedy any deficiencies in arrangements described;
- the extent to which a divorce was granted in the absence of satisfactory arrangements, or an adjournment, or the use of counselling, or the presentation of evidence.

It was predicted that cursory attention would be paid to the arrangements proposed for children and that there would be substantial variations in practice from registry to registry and possibly from judge to judge.

A total of 1293 forms were returned to the Institute, which included completed records from all judges in the Adelaide, Parramatta and Perth registries for those Form 4 matters which included children. In addition, six Melbourne judges, three Brisbane judges and one Canberra judge returned completed forms. The Sydney registry refused to participate in the study.

As expected, registry practices varied considerably with regard to the calling of evidence. The greatest variations occurred between two of the registries which provided complete records. Thus in Adelaide evidence was called in 12 per cent of relevant cases, while in Parramatta the figure was 90 per cent.

Considerable variation between registries was also reported on the subject of sufficiency of information received, with Parramatta judges indicating sufficiency in only 47 per cent of cases contrasted with Brisbane where the figure was 90 per cent. It should be noted however that some Brisbane judges did not return survey forms. It is impossible to suggest a reason for the differences in the response of judges to this matter. The profession in the different States may provide a greater or lesser amount of detail in the arrangements for children's documents, or the judges in different registries may have varying attitudes to what is or is not considered sufficient.

One of the courses open to a judge when a deficiency occurs in documentary evidence regarding arrangements for children, is to adjourn the divorce application to enable the necessary information to be provided. This occurred in the survey month in 6 per cent of cases.

Very few of the matters surveyed involved the use of counselling: only 61 or 5 per cent of cases involved referral to counselling.

The information which was returned to the Institute of Family Studies on this short survey provided the opportunity to test the extent to which proper arrangements for children were considered by various registries, and the extent to which registry practices varied. Explanations of these variations are only tentative and may be a result of listing procedures and the local practices of the legal profession. Another factor may be that judges are more likely to scrutinise in detail those divorce applications filed by 'in person' applicants, and to take less time scrutinising those filed by solicitors, particularly from firms specialising in family law.

Conciliation in the Court: Regulation 96 Analysis

The Family Court of Western Australia asked the Institute to analyse the record sheets which identify the cases in which Regulation 96 conferences are heard and their outcomes indicated. Seven hundred and eighty four of such conferences (which were all heard between January and June of 1982) were the subjects of the analysis.

Regulation 96 provides that the court or a registrar may order the parties to confer and make a bona fide endeavour to reach agreement on matters at issue between them wherever it is considered advantageous or advisable to do so.

An important difference between the procedure of the Family Court of Western Australia and that of the majority of Family Courts of Australia is that a Regulation 96 conference is required before a matter can proceed to a hearing on any issue. Therefore, every defended custody or access matter has been to both a Section 62(1) (i.e., court counselling) and Regulation 96 conference or combinations of both before it is heard. The counselling section has reported that a large proportion of settlements occurring at the Regulation 96 conference are the natural result of the prior Section 62 conference.

Because of the court staff's belief that Regulation 96 conferences in conjunction with counselling conferences are the cause of a high rate of settlement of custody and access cases, we looked particularly at conferences which included such cases.

Analysis of the record sheets showed that custody and access disputes proceed to a hearing less often than do those relating to maintenance and property.

Forty-two per cent of all conferences produced settlement of *all* matters which were recorded as being in dispute when the conference was held. In 35 per cent of conferences the conference was adjourned sine die (i.e., to a date to be fixed). In 61 per cent of all conferences at least one issue was settled.

Where a specific reason was given, the most frequent reason for adjournment was that negotiations were continuing (7 per cent of all conferences), closely followed by adjournments due to the failure of a spouse or his/her representative to attend (6 per cent). In 4 per cent of all conferences, the conference was adjourned for counselling. In a further 7 per cent of cases, no reason for the adjournment was given.

Also, according to the registrars' comments, only 16 per cent of conferences resulted in a matter being listed for hearing, which is an additional measure of the success of the conference, at least in the short term.

Where custody was mentioned on the record sheet as being the real issue in the Regulation 96 conference, either custody alone or custody plus access was settled in 79 per cent of cases. Where access was considered to be the real issue, either access alone or access plus custody was settled in 90 per cent of cases.

From the records kept by the Registrar of the Family Court of Western Australia, it appeared that custody and access issues were proceeding to a court hearing much less frequently than issues involving maintenance and property.

Maintenance and Property Issues: the Need for Further Studies

The Family Law Act 1975 makes provisions for the dissolution of marriage, the disposition of property, and for the continuing care and support of dependent persons — be they spouse or child of the marriage. Where the law is concerned with decisions which affect the structure and conditions of family life, it is not surprising that a certain amount of controversy has been generated and very disparate accounts given of the processes and outcomes of the law.

By and large, comments and criticisms of the implementation of property and maintenance provisions seem to have been based on anecdotes told from the perspective of the people themselves or from that of legal practitioners. From these accounts we probably learn about the exceptional cases since those who volunteer for interviews or questionnaires are more likely 'to have an axe to grind', to be fluent, voluble, middle-class, etc. Similarly, reported cases or those discussed by legal practitioners very possibly have more unusual features and thus have particular salience in the mind of the busy lawyer. What are at risk of being lost, or at least under-represented in this case study approach to an evaluation of the law, are the usual, the unremarkable, the silent, and the ordinary cases. Thus, for a full and accurate account of the processes and outcomes of the Family Court in matters of property and maintenance, a representative sample of clients is required — but not so easy to find. The Attorney-General has established two inquiries which will bear on these issues.

In June 1983 the Attorney-General announced that he was referring to the Australian Law Reform Commission consideration of 'whether any changes should be made to the law relating to the rights of the parties to a marriage in respect of property acquired by either or both of them, during or after their marriage, including their rights during, and upon the dissolution of, the marriage'. The Commission is required to furnish its report by December 1985. Subsequently it was announced that Professor David Hambly, of the Law Faculty, Australian National University, would be responsible for the conduct of the reference and would act also as a Law Reform Commissioner for the Australian Capital Territory.

The Institute is currently designing a study which will focus on the economic consequences of marriage breakdown. The sample will be a longitudinal one and the research is being designed to provide empirical data which are required for the Matrimonial Property Inquiry. Preliminary discussions have been held with Professor Hambly, members of his staff and of the Family Court of Australia.

The Attorney-General's Department has been conducting an internal inquiry into maintenance enforcement. The inquiry has involved an examination of the various systems operating both here (that is, in South Australia and Western Australia) and overseas for collection and enforcement of maintenance. The members of the Family Law Branch who are conducting the inquiry are required to report to the Attorney-General in December 1983. Its report will include recommendations regarding the establishment of a national agency for maintenance enforcement and collection.

Court Data on Property and Maintenance

A source of reliable information on *all* cases which are processed by the Family Court is the Family Court files. A file is opened when a party to the marriage makes an application to the court for principal, i.e., divorce or ancillary relief. Any subsequent application made by that person or his/her spouse regarding the termination of their marriage or the settlement of their property etc., is kept on that file. Also recorded within the file are biographical information, data on family composition and the disposition of the children of the marriage, the orders made by the court. In cases including property agreements and property orders, there are statements of financial circumstances.

There are, of course, matters which are not contained in the court file. For example, private agreements drawn up under Section 87 may omit many financial and personal details which the parties choose not to disclose. Perhaps a more important limitation on information in the files is the degree of detail contained in property and maintenance provisions. The variation here can be considerable. For one couple, it is sufficient that the property agreement state that the wife receive the matrimonial home and its mortgage in return for signing over her shares in the family business — with no values declared. For another couple, the agreement is expressed in terms of percentages or precise itemised values verified by third parties.

Maintenance orders are usually precise in dollars per week, but not always specific about education and health costs which may range from a negligible to a very major portion of a total maintenance provision.

With cooperation and permission of the Family Court of Australia, a random sample of 500 cases was selected from the population who were granted decrees nisi in 1981. This is a group with recent experience of the Court's process, yet they have had a reasonable time in which to achieve a stable outcome in property and maintenance matters.

Analysis of these files will provide a representative picture of the contents of property and maintenance orders and agreements, together with an exploration of the influences of biographical, family constellation and Court process factors on these outcomes. Biographical factors include age, ethnicity, duration of marriage. Family constellation factors include number of dependent children, custody and access arrangements.

In summary, this study is based on a random sample of cases from a Family Court Registry and its database is the Court files. It describes the processes involved in reaching financial settlements through the Court and the outcomes contained in the Court orders and agreements. This general description is refined by taking account of biographic, family constellation and financial factors.

Evaluation Study: Pilot Project to Provide a Supervised Access-changeover Centre

Over recent years a number of proposals have been put forward for the establishment of access-changeover centres to eliminate the violence that sometimes occurs when children are handed from one parent to the other. Some have queried the value of such centres and have suggested that greater attention should be paid to the making of access orders by the Family Court in situations where domestic violence has occurred.

As a result of a submission from the Women's Adviser to the Premier of South Australia and the South Australian Domestic Violence Committee, the Federal Attorney-General provided funding for a pilot project in Adelaide. The project is to make available supervised and secure access-changeover facilities in an existing agency to minimise or remove the likelihood of violence occurring. The pilot centre is to operate for a period of twelve months and will provide information on the nature and extent of the need for such a service, the degree to which it would combat the problems of continuing violence during the access-changeover, and the resources required to operate such services.

An evaluation and report on the operation of the access-changeover centre and collection of data on all aspects of the problem is being funded by the Institute and is an integral part of the pilot project.

Policy Paper: Legal Status and Family Relationship of Children in Stepfamilies

The Institute was requested by the Conference of Social Welfare Administrators to prepare a paper outlining the current arrangements being made with respect to the legal status of children in stepfamilies and the legal alternatives available.

The issue has become an important one because of the high rate of step-parent adoptions which are occurring (48 per cent of all adoptions 1981-82), and the increasing concern as to the appropriateness of adoption as a means of defining the legal status and relationship of children in stepfamilies.

The paper drew attention to the large number of children already living in stepfamilies and to the annual number of remarriages, a significant proportion of which involve children. The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates that a minimum of 6 per cent of married couple families with children involve a step relationship.

Following an examination of the reasons for seeking and the effects of granting an adoption order in favour of a step-parent, the paper identified the major objectives of legal arrangements affecting status, rights and obligations and examined the appropriateness of step-parent adoptions in the light of these objectives. Reference was made to decisions of the courts in cases involving applications to adopt stepchildren. The final section of the paper examines the legal alternatives to adoption, i.e., the use of orders for guardianship or custody, and the provisions of the English *Children Act* 1975 with respect to orders for custody or for custodianship.

The paper concludes by recommending that where a step-parent seeks to establish rights and obligations with respect to a stepchild, an order for guardianship and/or custody would best meet the needs of the child. It is also suggested that an adoption order should only be granted where exceptional circumstances exist whereby the court is satisfied that the order would better promote the welfare of the child than an order for guardianship and/or custody.

The paper received strong support from the Welfare Administrators and is being prepared for publication.

Research Project on the Long Term Adjustment of Relinquishing Mothers in Adoption

Through the Institute's Support Grant program, the Institute provided funding to assist a study of the long term effects of relinquishment on 400 relinquishing mothers. The project was undertaken by Professor Robin Winkler and Margaret van Keppel of the Department of Psychology of the University of Western Australia.

The study, the first of its kind to be undertaken in Australia, found:

- the effects of relinquishment on the mother are negative and long-lasting;
- the sense of loss of relinquishing mothers remained constant for up to 30 years and, for approximately half the women, the sense of loss increased over this period;
- adjustment to the loss was made more difficult when there was an absence of opportunities to talk through their feelings, a lack of social support and a continuing sense of loss — these factors were compounded by the 'silence' surrounding relinquishing mothers and the lack of information as to the welfare of their child or even knowledge that the child was still alive.

The findings of the study have important implications for future adoption policy and practice. The authors recommend the need for greater availability of counselling and support for women who relinquish or who have relinquished a child for adoption and for increased availability of information to the mother as to the present welfare situation of her child. They also suggest the following changes to adoption legislation:

- a periodic release of non-identifying information by adoption agencies about the placement and the child's progress;
- the availability of original birth certificates to adoptees, allowing them to make contact with their birth parents if they so desire;
- the establishment of official contact registers which will facilitate reunions;
- the introduction of alternatives to the current traditional system of 'closed adoptions' (e.g., open or semi-open adoptions).

The report on this study of relinquishing mothers has been completed and is currently being edited for publication by the Institute.

3

Families and the Economy

Family Incomes 50
Government Transfer Policies 55
Family Data Banks 56
Work and Families 56
The Cost of Children 62
Housing 66

The most basic resource for family survival is an adequate income. Money for food, clothing, housing and other essentials of life must come from somewhere. That somewhere is usually paid work; and work availability, type and distribution all depend upon the structure of the economy.

The Institute of Family Studies therefore is looking closely at the economy as a major influence on marital and family stability. To look only at internal family processes or to see the family unit in isolation from broader economic and political influences would be manifestly absurd. No amount of financial counselling will help if the basic income is inadequate, housing referral services are useless if the public housing stock is not available, counselling on how to handle marital conflict will not work if the basic causes of conflict — unemployment, low income, irregular pay cheques — remain unresolved.

There are problems of course in tackling economic issues. The Institute is not an economic advisory unit; it does not have a large staff of economists; the notion of 'the economy' covers everything from taxation, employment, structural changes in the labour market, technology and wealth to pensions, benefits, poverty and the nature of the modern welfare state.

Central issues arise that bear intimately on the nature of family life, such as the question of women's work and whether (and how) their unpaid contribution to the national economy through housework and child care can be measured, or how the economy's demand for the entry of women into the paid labour force affects marital and family patterns. An economy premised on the outdated notion that the man is the 'breadwinner' and the woman the 'homemaker' is quite clearly inadequate in the late twentieth century. Yet a nineteenth century work timetable dictates the patterns of modern family life. Hours of work, shopping hours, public transport, the lack of rights to sick leave and maternity leave, paternity leave, superannuation for part-time workers, poor child care provision, all reflect a failure to consider the facts of a changed Australian family structure.

Central to studies of the family too, is the dilemma of all modern economies — how to balance income from jobs against income from public supports and transfers. Present social attitudes have lessened the stigma of public dependency. Parts of 'the social wage' are readily acceptable via free schooling, health care, subsidised public trasport, all the welter of services provided from taxation by federal, state and local governments. No-one thinks of these services any longer as public dependency because it is acknowledged that modern society depends upon pooling and sharing resources for those tasks the individual or the separate family cannot adequately provide. Yet some baulk still at unemployment benefits, at supporting parent benefits, at so called 'handouts' which seem to swell the welfare bill and are alleged to lead people away from work. In a country with over 10 per cent hard-core unemployment, the claim is still heard that 'they could find work if they wanted to' and there remains resentment of the subsistence level payments made to permit family survival.

The Institute of Family Studies is disturbed at the low level of political and public debate on such central economic matters. It is disturbing that economists seem unable to devise a system that will maintain the value and dignity of human life. Economic modelling, balancing the budget, allocating spending priorities are not 'objective' processes based on inexorable economic laws; they are expedient or principled political decisions which reflect the values and interests of those in power. Budgets can support or fail to support family life; they can support some families at the expense of others; they can make life tolerable for some individuals within families and intolerable for others.

The question to be asked is 'Who wins, who loses?' and the Institute's approach to families and the economy consistently asks that question.

A related dilemma is whether so-called 'needs-based' funding may expose families not yet at risk to pressures which can be borne for only a limited time. Prevention and general support must be the goal. Clearly there are points in the family life cycle at which people are especially vulnerable. There are also categories of individuals and families with special needs they cannot meet themselves. But every family has basic needs and the economic system must operate to guarantee those needs if 'supporting the family unit' is to be anything more than empty rhetoric. If not through providing enough jobs, then that guarantee must come via public support. It will always be a 'mix', a balance between private effort and public responsibility. The debate must not become bogged down in simplistic exchanges about 'socialism' versus 'free enterprise', or glib assertions about past failures such as the Australian Assistance Plan which at least tried to provide useful work in return for income support in lieu of pure 'handouts'.

Thus the Institute of Family Studies intends to re-examine the concepts of guaranteed income, negative income tax, the social wage, a youth wage, etc. to raise the level of public and political understanding of our mutual responsibilities in a modern state such as Australia. Our starting point has been to attempt to document the 'Who wins, who loses?' question, to show the current status of different families in the Australian marketplace. The Institute looked at incomes, equity as it is affected by the tax transfer system, work and unemployment as they affect family life, the costs of children and issues related to family and youth. The Institute is working towards a 'Family Data Bank' which will help model alternative policy approaches to economic supports for families. In all of our research studies we are looking carefully at the 'work-family interface' to see how family life is being influenced by economic structures and decisions. What follows is a summary of our work in this area during the past twelve months.

Family Incomes

While income is but one aspect of inequality there is so little information on many other aspects of inequality that income data, inadequate as it is, assumes considerable importance. Some of the important features of inequality among families revealed by the (improving) data on incomes published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics are:

- one-parent families are over-represented at the bottom of the income scale, couples with children are over-represented at the top;
- income is much more unevenly distributed among women than among men — women's incomes are generally much lower than men's but are increasing faster;
- families where both husband and wife work full-time throughout the year are frequently among the elite — at the same time, many families would be in poverty if they had only one parent working;
- part-year and part-time employment is very common among young people and married women;
- much of the inequality in weekly earnings is related to the age of the worker.

Relative Family Incomes

Analysis of Australian Bureau of Statistics data according to family type shows that couples with children make up 29 per cent of all income units but 56 per cent of those in the top 10 per cent (see Table 3.1). In terms of June 1983 dollars, the top 10 per cent of income units had an income over $36 000.

In contrast, among the bottom 20 per cent of income units (approximately $6750 p.a.), couples with children made up only 2.7 per cent of income units, with one-parent families and single people over represented. These figures are difficult to interpret because they do

Table 3.1 Comparison of top 10% and bottom 20% of income units, Australia, 1983

	All income Units %	*Top 10%*	*Bottom 20%*
Couples, no children	23.4	39.0	4.4
Couples with dependent children	29.3	56.1	2.7
One parent families	3.5	0.8	4.3
Single people	43.8	4.1	88.6
	100.0	100.0	100.0

not take account of family size and it is not clear who is counted as a student or dependent child and who is counted as a separate income unit. However, the very low relative incomes of one-parent families have been reported by a number of other studies and give much cause for concern.

Sex Differences in Incomes

Preliminary figures from the 1981-82 ABS survey of incomes show that the average income of women who received income was $6230, less than half the average income of male income recipients (see Table 3.2). The low average for women is partly because many have no income other than family allowances (income received from a spouse was not counted in the survey). In 1981-82, 1 206 000 women had income between $1 and $999 — about four times the number of men in this income range. The payment of family allowances to women without other income results in their inclusion in the ABS survey but results in a lowering of the average income of female income recipients. However, as Meredith Edwards has shown, 'family income' is not necessarily shared by husband and wife and in many instances the family allowance is the only independent income available to a wife.

Table 3.2 Income of individuals, 1981-82, by sex

	Male	*Female*
Number of income recipients	4 874 800	4 787 900
Mean annual income	$13 020	$6 230
Gini coefficient of inequality	0.39	0.50
Share of income going to each decile class		
Lowest	1.0	0.4
2nd	2.6	1.0
3rd	3.9	2.5
4th	6.3	5.1
5th	8.7	6.1
6th	10.4	7.6
7th	11.9	10.8
8th	13.8	15.1
9th	16.4	20.1
Highest	25.0	31.4
Total	100.0	100.0

Note: The Gini coefficient is a measure of inequality which can vary between 0 (all have equal incomes) to 1 (all income is in the hands of 1 person)

Table 3.3 Proportion of recorded income going to males and females

	% of recorded income going to		
	Males	Females	Total
1968-69	75.6	24.3	100
1973-74	73.4	26.5	100
1978-79	68.5	31.6	100
1981-82	68.0	32.0	100

Note: Errors due to rounding

The distribution of total income among women is more unequal than among men (see Table 3.3) but much of this reflects differences in sources of income and employment patterns. Among full-year, full-time workers, earnings are *more* equally distributed among women than among men.

The proportion of income received by women has increased substantially since surveys were first undertaken in 1968-69, but women still received less than a third of the total in 1981-82, a very small percentage increase since 1978-79.

Dual Income Families

Table 3.4 shows the substantial variation in the average incomes of different groups and suggests that couples where the wife works full-year, full-time have standards of living well above average. It must be remembered, however, that this is on the basis of combined

Table 3.4 Mean income by income unit type, 1978-79

Family type	*% of families*	*Mean income*	*Mean income as a % of total mean ($11 310)*
	%	$	%
Single People			
single aged people	10.2	4 140	37
single people under 21	11.2	4 850	43
single females 21-59	8.1	7 410	66
single males 21-64	14.3	9 190	81
One Parent Families			
employed full-year, full-time	0.9	13 310	118
employed part-year or part-time	0.9	6 840	60
not employed	1.7	4 520	40
Couples			
no children, wife works full-year, full-time	5.9	21 370	189
wife works part-year or part-time	5.5	16 780	148
wife not employed	12.0	9 400	83
With dependent children			
wife works full-year, full-time	5.3	21 080	186
wife works part-year or part-time	11.2	17 660	156
wife not employed	12.8	13 800	122
Total %	100.0	11 310	

income and does not allow for the number of people on that income. To the extent that income is not pooled and all family members do not benefit from household expenditure, the picture may be quite different. Forty-nine per cent of wives had not earned income of their own, and even those who did may not have control of their income or benefit from its expenditure.

The impact of the second wage on family income can be quite dramatic, and for some families this is the only way housing and other basic costs can be met. The 1978-79 Income Survey found that there were 126 400 couples with dependent children receiving incomes less than $7000 p.a. (the poverty line for couples with two children). Without the income of wives in paid employment, the number of families with children receiving less than $7000 p.a. would increase by approximately 123 645, that is, it would almost double.

It is also important to note than many so-called 'dual income' families in fact earn only one full income with some part-time, part-year contribution from the wife.

Partial Employment

Much of the analysis of employment levels and family incomes gives a misleading impression because it does not take account of part-year employment. Cross sectional surveys record employment of full-year employed persons and, depending on the period of the year in which the survey is carried out, a greater or lesser number of part-year employees. Some special ABS surveys look at whole-year employment patterns however, and, as shown in Table 3.5, the part-year employment increases the number of employed persons by 70 per cent to 80 per cent among female one-parent families and married women with young children. The pattern of part-year employment is more common for some groups than part-time employment throughout the year but so far has received little attention.

Part-year employment is not restricted to women. Table 3.6 suggests that substantial proportions of men under 24 and over 60 are also employed for part of the year only. The number of 15-19 year olds employed at some time in the year February 1980 to February 1981 was 16 per cent more than the number employed in December 1980. Even these figures underestimate the total extent of part-year employment as many of these employed in December would also be part-year workers. Table 3.6 shows, however, that cross section data from the peak employment month of December substantially understate total employment levels and thus family incomes from employment.

Age Differences in Earnings

In addition to variation in family incomes which result from differences in numbers of earners, number of weeks worked and number of hours worked per week, there is consider-

Table 3.5 Extent of full-year and part-year employment among selected groups, 1978-79

	Full year '000	*Part year '000*	*Part year as % full year*
Married Women			
No children	527.3	192.8	36.6
Children under 6	218.3	175.0	80.2
Youngest child 6-14	354.4	158.9	31.0
Youngest child 12-15	99.2	35.1	35.4
Female One Parent Families	46.0	34.8	75.7
Male One Parent Families	24.6	6.4	26.0

Table 3.6 Employment during a year versus employment at a point of time, males and females by age

	Males			*Females*		
	Employed			*Employed*		
	December '000	*At some time '000*	*% Diff.*	*December '000*	*At some time '000*	*% Diff.*
15-19	390.6	451.6	16	332.9	395.1	19
20-24	543.6	590.6	9	399.7	474.2	19
25-34	1095.4	1142.5	4	583.1	728.9	25
35-44	857.8	886.9	3	489.2	552.7	13
45-54	688.0	708.3	3	339.3	381.2	12
55-59	297.6	306.9	3	104.7	123.3	18
60-64	137.3	167.4	22	40.2	53.8	34
65+over	70.2	88.1	25	19.9	28.3	42
	4080.4	4342.2	6	2309.01	2737.6	19

Table 3.7 Current weekly income* of wage and salary earners by age and sex

	Males		*Females*		
	Mean income $	*As a % of male mean*	*Mean income $*	*As a % of females mean*	*As a % of males of same age*
15-17	136	39.9	125	48.9	91.9
18-19	189	55.4	178	69.5	94.2
20-24	280	82.1	245	95.7	87.5
25-34	353	103.5	294	114.8	83.3
35-44	383	112.3	282	110.2	73.6
45-54	386	113.2	262	102.3	67.9
55-59	365	107.0	282	110.2	77.3
60-64	325	95.3	270	105.5	83.1
65-69	263	77.1	n.a.		..
Total	341	100	256	100	75.1

* Refers to income from all sources in the week prior to the interview. The survey was conducted in the period September to November 1982.

able inequality associated with the age and sex of the employee (see Table 3.7). Whatever the economic and industrial reasons for these differences, they have important implications for individuals and family life. The relatively low earnings of young full-time employees, for example, adds to the difficulty of meeting the costs of a new household and may provide grounds for policies which aim to redistribute income from older to young workers.

There is a real need to know more about how youth contributions to family income from casual work affect family stability and family functioning and how contributions to or from aged family members alter the balance of support. The Institute plans to tackle such issues in the next phase of its longitudinal Family Formation project.

Government Transfer Policies

In October 1982, the Institute published the first of its Policy Background Papers, *Equity and the impact on families of the Australian tax transfer system*. This paper was prepared for the Institute by Dr Peter Saunders, a senior lecturer in economics at the University of Sydney currently working for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in Paris, and a leading expert on the Australian tax and pensions systems.

The study examines the effects of changes in personal income tax and pensions policies in the years 1962 to 1981 on the relative income positions of families of differering size and composition. The report outlines the principal features of the taxation and income support systems and shows how the importance of different taxes and expenditure categories changed over the two decades examined. The study discusses the three major principles of the tax transfer system, equity, efficiency and simplicity.

The report contains a detailed analysis of how the tax and income support systems have affected different families by analysing changes in the real value of tax concessions (including child endowment and family allowances) given to different family types. It also sets out the percentage increases in income tax payable by different family types and different income groups, but, due to resource constraints, contains little analysis of two-earner families. The final part of the report's analysis compares changes in pension and benefit levels with changes in community incomes generally, both before and after allowing for income tax deductions.

The study also examines a number of policy options including the income testing of family allowances, the adoption of family unit taxation and the introduction of the guaranteed minimum income scheme proposed by the Australian Commission of Inquiry into Poverty.

The principal findings of the report are:

1 There was a large increase in the relative importance of personal income tax as a source of total revenue in the period between 1961-62 and 1980-81.

2 If both direct and indirect taxes are included, tax falls most heavily on the lowest income groups, due to the proportionally large amounts of indirect taxes paid by this group.

3 The income support system of cash benefits is 'a much more powerful vehicle for income redistribution than the tax system'.

4 Family allowances are not indexed, and although rates have been increased in 1981 and 1982, their real value has declined since their introduction in the 1976 Budget.

5 The real values of the Dependent Spouse Rebate and the Sole Parent Rebate have increased since their introduction in the 1975 Budget.

6 Between 1975-76 and 1980-81 income taxes on low income earners went up by a larger percentage than taxes on similar families with high incomes. The disposable incomes of low income families fell, relative to those earning four times average weekly earnings.

7 Marginal tax rates increased for individuals with low annual incomes but declined for those with income on and above average weekly earnings.

8 Between 1975-76 and 1980-81 percentage increases in average tax rates were larger for families with children than for couples without children or single people.

9 The larger the family the larger was the percentage increase in income tax.

10 The incomes of pensioners and beneficiaries with children fell, relative to the disposable incomes of those with average weekly earnings. The abolition of indexation for single unemployed and sick people led to a sharp decline in their incomes relative to prices and to the incomes of those on average weekly earnings.

11 Income support policy resulted in a decline in the real value of assistance to low income families with children, both absolutely and relative to low income families without children.

The report was discussed at a seminar in Melbourne in August 1982. Meredith Edwards (then a lecturer at the Canberra College of Advanced Education), Professor Ronald Henderson (consultant to the Victorian Council of Social Services) and Wayne Jackson (from the Department of Social Security) prepared comments on the report and the first two are included in an appendix to the publication.

Two of the policy options discussed at the seminar were increases in family allowances and the introduction of a non-means tested allowance for children under six. The Institute is still assessing these and other options raised in the report, but research so far suggests that family allowances or an under six allowance may be less effective methods of meeting family needs than an increase in the (income tested) children's allowance.

Family Data Bank

The Saunders paper and the major seminar based on it revealed the urgent need for a more adequate data base on family incomes. For example, Dr Saunders was unable to build into his analyses much consideration of families with two incomes and none at all of families with 'one and a bit' incomes where the wife's contribution is part-time and/or spasmodic. This was because no adequate data bank exists in Australia.

If the Institute is to be able to examine the impact of shifts in taxation and other income transfer policies on families, we need a more complete and systematic set of data from which to assess alternative policies. A vital aspect of this will be a more complex set of 'family types' than is currently available, because policies will have differing impacts on families of differing kinds and at different stages of the life cycle.

The decision was therefore made to develop a Family Data Bank, drawing on national statistical collections which can be updated regularly.

As a prototype, the Institute commissioned the writing of a program which uses Australian Bureau of Statistics national data on the incomes and characteristics of Australian families to supplement its own research material. The system, which is currently undergoing testing, permits the user to try different weighting systems (e.g., the Henderson poverty weights) for aggregating different family types, to try different assistance formulae incorporating means tested and non-means tested, taxed and non-taxed transfers, and to calculate the numbers of people, the numbers of families and the dollars per week transferred, and the impact on income inequality.

The usefulness of the Institute's data base will be greatly increased when the Australian Bureau of Statistics releases unit record data from the Family and Income surveys as this will enable much more detailed examination of family types, employment patterns and incomes.

Work and Families

While it is generally acknowledged that work is a family's major means of gaining the income necessary to keep a roof over its head, food in its stomach and some degree of quality and sense of well-being in family life, there is surprisingly little analysis of the close connection between work and family life. Indeed, in discussion of the economy the Institute would like to see a greater awareness of the relevance to the quality of Australian family life, rather than to the validity or otherwise of economic theories or models.

The Institute's research program has built into every study some picture of the way in which each family's place in the economic structure affects their functioning and well-being. The family never exists alone and couples and their children are affected both directly and indirectly by the world of work and the economic context of Australian society. Given that Australia in recent years has faced unprecedented levels of unemployment it can safely be said that the context for many families has changed for the worse. Given too, that technological change has produced structural shifts in the nature of employment, it is also safe to say that the nature of the 'family-work interface' will change its complexion markedly in the near future.

Preliminary findings from overseas studies suggest that, apart from the increased pressures associated with a drop in income, a change in the source of income from employment to social services may increase rates of family breakup because of the loss of status of the 'breadwinner'.

Although the impact of income transfer payments on marital instability was least when payments were more generous, controlled experiments in America found that marital dissolution rates were higher — by some estimates 70 per cent higher — among two-parent families who received the extra social service payments than among the control group of families. The findings from these relatively short term studies (3-5 years) are in conflict with cross sectional research which has found that rates of female headship decrease as income rises.

Changes in Employment Levels

Table 3.8 shows the employment status of married men over the past 13 years. During this period employment peaked in 1974, dropped back to 1973 levels the following year and has remained about the same level through to 1983. Over the same period however, unemployment rose dramatically, to the point where it almost doubled between 1982 and 1983. Between June and December 1982 unemployment of all males over the age of 20 years increased by 72 per cent from 164 500 to 282 700 and since then there has been a further increase to 340 300 in June 1983 — an increase of 20 per cent. Of these 340 300, about 54 per cent are married men. The impact on families has yet to be assessed. The recession has

Table 3.8 Married males — employment status

August	*Employed (Mainly full-time)*	*Unemployed (Full-time seekers)*	*Unemployment rate*	*Unemployment increase over previous year*
	('000s)		%	%
1970	2629.9	16.7	0.6	−1.2
1971	2684.6	19.9	0.7	+19.2
1972	2738.9	33.2	1.2	+66.8
1973	2783.9	19.2	0.7	−42.2
1974	2802.5	32.3	1.1	+68.2
1975	2775.3	57.3	2.0	+77.4
1976	2774.4	59.6	2.1	+ 4.0
1977	2780.3	63.9	2.2	+ 7.2
1978	2720.8	75.7	2.7	+18.5
1979	2760.9	69.9	2.5	− 7.7
1980	2779.5	74.5	2.6	+ 6.6
1981	2774.0	75.0	2.6	+ 0.7
1982	2773.3	97.7	3.5	+30.3
1983 (June)	2743.9	186.1	6.4	+90.5

had a major impact on manufacturing industries, where the numbers of males employed dropped by 155 300 in the two years from May 1981 to May 1983. Most other industries have retained employment numbers.

Surveys of labour force experience in the years 1980-81 and 1982-83 reveal a drop of 2 per cent in employed married males from 83 per cent to 81 per cent. In comparison there was no drop in employment for married females, 48.6 per cent of whom were employed for some time in the year ending February 1981 and 48.7 per cent in year ending February 1983.

Figure 3.1 graphs the trend of employment and unemployment of males and females in the various age groups. The trends of employment are fairly similar for males and females with decreases in the 15-19 and the over 45 year old groups and increases in the 35-44 year old groups.

Unemployment trends show a dramatic increase during 1982 for all age groups. Teenage unemployment has always been high but has increased markedly for boys since 1982. The increase is very pronounced for men aged 35-54 years but is also dramatic for the other age groups.

Overall, the trends present a grim picture for Australians and their families.

Figure 3.2 shows the trends in participation rates over the last 13 years. For males there has been a very large decrease in participation rates particularly for ages 45 years and over. For males aged 20-24 and 25-34 years there has been a slight decrease.

In contrast, women have increased their participation in all age groups up to 55 years. Teenage rates have fluctuated on an overall upward trend. The participation rates include full-time and part-time workers. The major increase in employment has been of part-time workers, mainly married women.

The impact on families of the increased participation of women has been explored by various writers. The increase has been in dual income families. Female breadwinners have usually been in one-parent households. There does not seem to have been a substitution of wives replacing husbands in the workforce. Whether this has changed since June 1982 when unemployment increased dramatically is not able to be determined from the available information.

Unemployment and Families

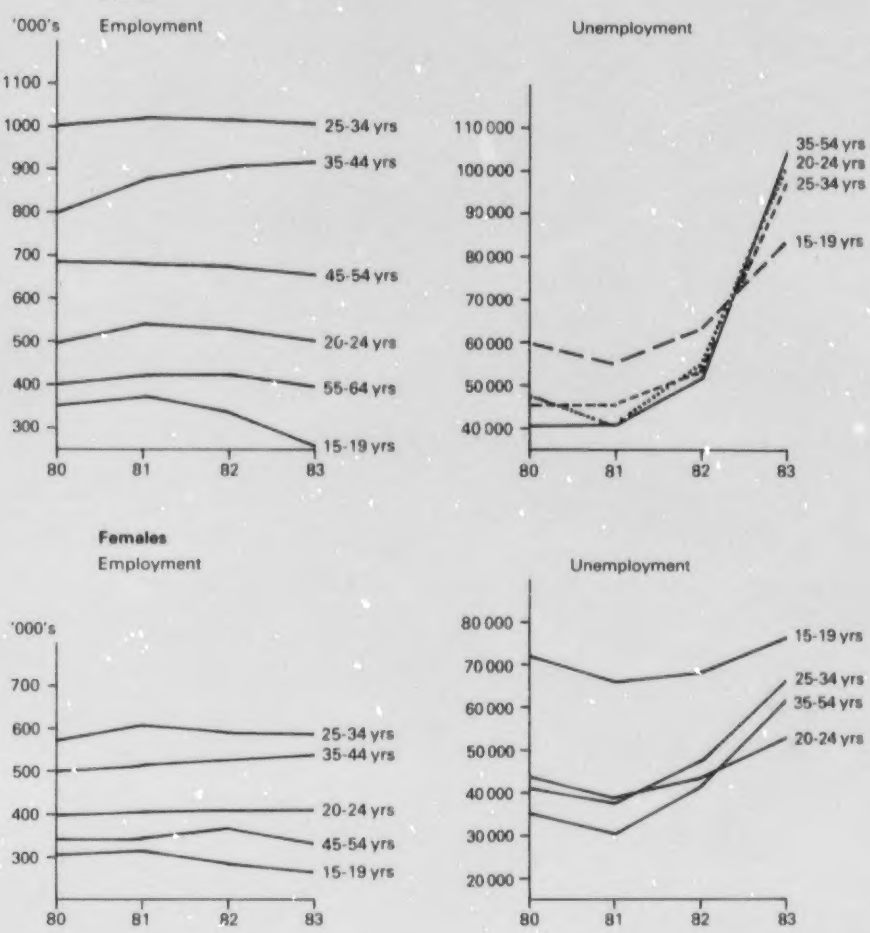
The Institute has monitored changes in the level and composition of unemployment and endeavoured to relate these changes to a number of economic and social factors. In the year June 1982 to June 1983, the total number of unemployed men and women increased from 447 800 to 691 100 or 54 per cent.

Of particular concern is the sudden increase in the numbers of unemployed married men. The number of married males who are unemployed rose from 89 700 in June 1982 to 186 100 in June 1983 — a doubling in twelve months.

Looking at the increase since 1970 in unemployment of married men, Table 3.9 shows a doubling in the unemployment rate from 1.1 per cent in 1974 to 2.0 per cent in 1975. Unemployment then climbed more slowly until 1982, when it increased from 2.6 per cent to 3.5 per cent. By June 1983 the rate had reached 6.4 per cent of married men seeking full-time work.

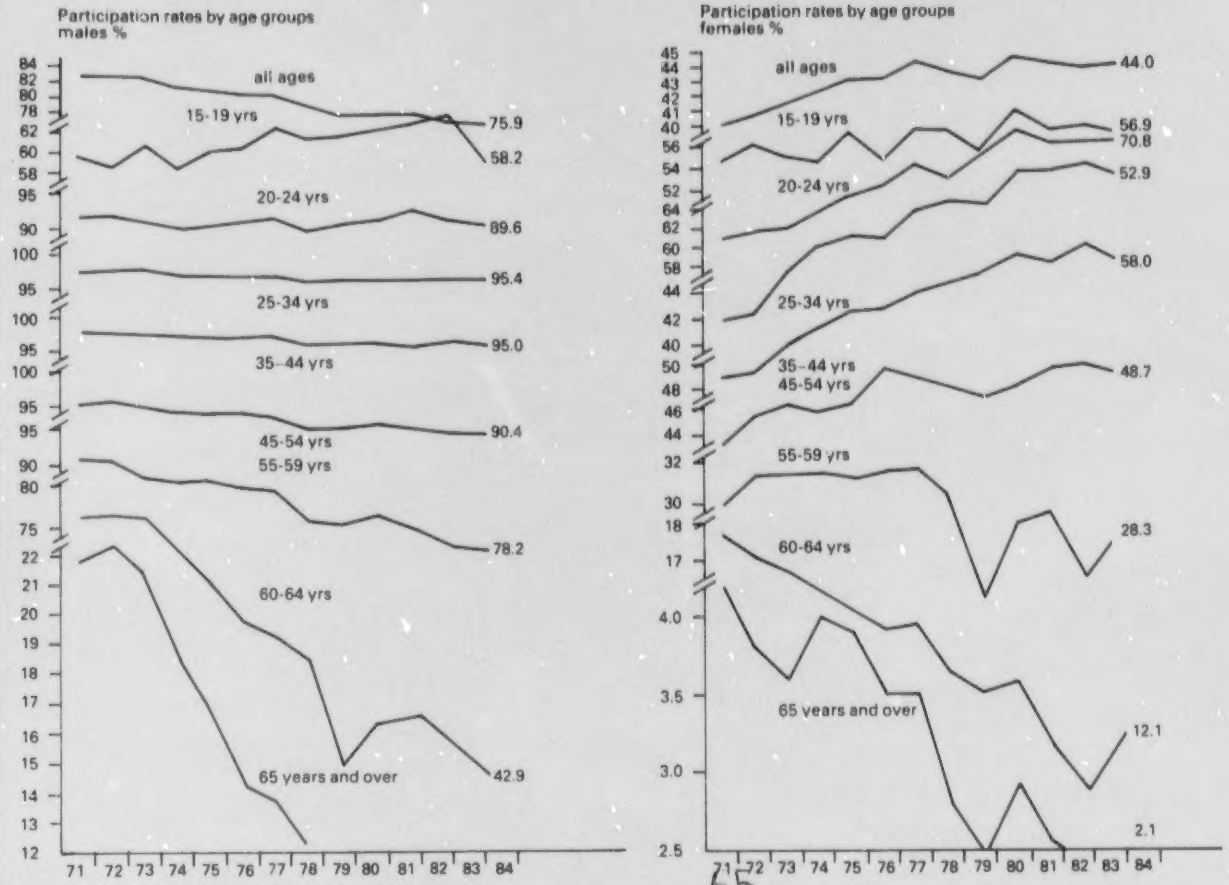
For married females the increase was 33 800 or 40 per cent in the same period. It should be noted that married women are not generally eligible for unemployment benefit and often do not register for work. For this reason they are often undercounted. Married women make up the majority of the hidden unemployed. In September 1981 it was estimated there were 50 800 married women who comprised 69.3 per cent of discouraged job seekers.

Figure 3.1



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *The Labour Force Australia* June 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983

Figure 3.2



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *The Labour Force in Australia* August for the relevant years

Table 3.9 Duration of unemployment experienced by Geelong residents: all respondents, May 1982

Duration of unemployment	*Before first job (respondents only)* %	*Total family experience of unemployment* %
Less than 1 month	61.7	10.3
1 month-less than six months	5.8	29.7
6 months-less than 1 year	1.5	14.2
More than 1 year	1.0	21.6
Not stated	30.0	24.2
Total	100	100

Unemployment and Family Support

The way families coped with employment problems was dealt with in the Institute's Family Support Networks Study. A first report to respondents in the Geelong sample has been published and parallel studies are nearing completion in Darwin/Jabiru and Ashfield, an inner-city Sydney suburb with a high concentration of ethnic and working-class families. While the study was aimed at looking broadly at family support networks to see whether families, friends and neighbours do help one another in times of need, a great deal of material on jobs and the impact of unemployment was obtained.

Among the 416 families interviewed in Geelong, 53 per cent have had direct experience of unemployment. We obtained details for 232 cases of unemployment. Of the cases reported, 41 per cent were respondents themselves, 19 per cent were unemployed partners, 30 per cent were unemployed children, and 10 per cent other unemployed family members. Of these, 10 per cent were unemployed for less than one month, with 30 per cent unemployed between one and six months, 14 per cent between 6-12 months, and 22 per cent for more than a year. Unemployment is a major factor in the lives of many Geelong families. And, since our interviews in May 1982, unemployment levels have increased.

Of the 416 respondents, over 40 per cent said they spent considerable time searching for jobs using their own initiative. More than half (67 per cent) went to the Commonwealth Employment Service where 15 per cent got a job and 44 per cent said they received little help. Other employment and recruitment agencies were used by 4 per cent but were thought to have been of little help. Recruitment programs have largely disappeared in these times of high unemployment.

Table 3.9 shows that the waiting period for a first job for all respondents is less than the waiting period experienced by the family during unemployment up to May 1982 when the survey was done. Table 3.9 illustrates the contrast between the experience of respondents, most of whom were over 30 and had got their first job quickly in a time of full employment, with the total experience of the family, including young people who were often out of work for long periods. In other words, it contrasts the experience of getting a first job in a time of full employment with the total experience of families finding jobs in a period of growing unemployment up to May 1982.

Some 70 per cent of respondents used their immediate and extended family and their friends for moral support such as getting advice, talking things over, encouragement to keep on going and generally discussing problems. In 16 per cent of cases, family and friends also tried to help by 'ringing up about employment', 'speaking to employers', 'asking around', and by 'driving persons to interviews'.

Financial help from families was received by 11 per cent of respondents, but no such help was given by friends. Given the levels of incomes reported, it is clearly unrealistic to expect families to provide much direct financial help — they provide practical help such as bed and board, advice and moral support, but there is just not the spare cash to pass around.

Some 8 per cent of persons mention that being unemployed for a long time leads to conflicts developing within the family, for example fighting, drinking, illness and depression and general nervousness and irritability.

In addition to the main interview which covered various key points of need for support in the family life cycle, we conducted in-depth interviews with sub-samples of people in different situations. One was a group of unemployed people and these case studies provide vivid evidence of both the drastic effects of losing a job and the incredible 'holding power' of family life. There was a strong resistance to 'going on welfare', a desire to find work and be independent and a belief that 'the family' should cope with its own difficulties as far as possible. Our reading of these findings suggests that work is central to a family's sense of well-being and independence and that their acceptance of 'welfare support' is an indication of strain beyond tolerable limits.

Research on Work and Family Functioning

As mentioned at the start of this section, there is a dearth of research on what we call 'the family-work interface'. This gap was revealed by a review of the literature by Graeme Brewer commissioned and published by the Institute. In it, Brewer examines the interaction between paid work and family functioning from the perspective of structures of the work place, such as part-time work, shiftwork, industrial health problems; from the perspectives of structures of the family, such as division of household labour, dual earner families; and with regard to mediating structures, such as child care, which affect both intra-family functioning and industrial behaviour. The economic and social-psychological impact of unemployment is also examined.

The review pays particular attention to the literature, analysing empirical research, especially Australian studies. The author notes, however, that on many issues:

> the paucity of local material necessitates a concentration on overseas (frequently American) information from which extrapolations to the Australian situation may sometimes cautiously be drawn.

Future research, Brewer concludes, should examine two issues; the impact of work and unemployment on family functioning and the extent to which differences in family functioning associated with work status affect the behaviour and psychological development of children.

The Institute plans to use the second stage of its Family Formation Study, involving re-interview of the national sample of 18-34 year olds, to fill the gaps on family functioning in relation to employment and its effects on family life.

The Cost of Children

One of the surprising gaps, in view of the many areas affected, is information on the cost of children. Decisions on levels of pensions and benefits, family allowances and foster home support payments are made without the benefit of firm Australian data on the cost of children.

Another important policy area affected by the costs of children is that of maintenance awards in the courts. It was, in fact, partly as a result of approaches from judges and the Family Law Council that the Institute decided to conduct research on this issue.

There are two main approaches to assessing the cost of children:

- a budgetary or 'basket of goods' approach;
- equivalence scales derived from statistical analysis of expenditure data.

The Institute is pursuing the budgetary approach and has costed many of the items in its 'basket of goods and services'. It was decided to determine a minimal level of expenditure and an adequate level of expenditure.

Food

A study in the United Kingdom by David Piachaud has been used to provide an estimate of the minimum cost of children and has been checked against Australian prices in 1980. The Institute also checked Australian prices for the food and clothing items in 1983. A dietician's menu for an adequate diet was provided to the Institute by the Home Economics Section of the Victoria College, Armadale Campus (see Figure 3.3 for each diet). This diet was found to be a third more expensive than the cost of Piachaud's minimal diet for the age groups 2-3 years and over four fifths more expensive for the 11 year old groups. (See Table 3.10)

Food costs from a number of surveys show an increase with age of child. For the low cost diet the increase in food costs with age is in the region of 50 to 60 per cent from age two to age 11.

This obvious finding has not been acknowledged in any of the policies relating to pensions, benefits or family allowances.

Figure 3.3

Piachaud's diet for child aged 11

Breakfast	*Lunch*	*Tea*
Minimum Diet		
Cereal, 1oz	Minced beef, 2oz	Cauliflower cheese 6oz
+ milk, ¼ pint	Potatoes 7oz (3oz)	Peas 4oz
1 egg, class	Cabbage 5oz (4oz)	2 slices bread
2 slices bread	1 orange 7oz	+ margarine
+ margarine	1 cup of milk	1 cup of milk
1 cup of milk		

Dietician's one day food plan

Breakfast	*Lunch*	*Dinner*
Orange juice Porridge with milk and sugar Baked beans on toast Glass of milk	Egg and lettuce sandwich Small cake — plain Banana Flavoured milk	Tuna patties Potato chips Brussel sprouts Carrots Fruit salad and ice-cream Glass of milk
Mid-morning	*Mid-afternoon*	
Cheese stick Savoury biscuit	Wheatmeal biscuit with peanut butter or vegemite Glass of milk	Water during the day

Table 3.10 Variation in the cost of food per week, with age of children

	Ages of children				
Survey	*2* $	*5* $	*8* $	*11* $	*15* $
Australian costing of Piachaud, Minimum Diet May 1983	10.43	11.43	15.61	16.24	18.01
Dieticians' menu, adequate diet Melb. May 1983	14.00	15.19	20.37	29.96	35.80

Clothes

Decisions on the cost of clothes depend on a subjective assessment of what clothes are necessary. The UK study costed a basic minimum wardrobe and this was adapted to Australian conditions by reference to evidence from Victorian foster parents on what clothes children need. Surveys by foster mothers and by women in charge of cottage homes in Victoria also enabled estimates to be made of the cost of an adequate wardrobe for children. Both sets of requirements show increasing costs with age of children.

In considering clothing costs, the items detailed in the Piachaud Study were costed for Australia in 1981 and in 1983. The costs range from $2.27 per week for two year olds to $3.70 per week for 11-14 year olds. The foster parents and cottage mothers in Victoria present a more adequate wardrobe which ranges in price from about $4.50 for 2 year olds to between $7 and $9 for 11-14 year olds. These costs would appear to be reasonable given the items detailed in Table 3.11 showing the items for an 8-11 year old boy.

Further Work on the Cost of Children

As Table 3.12 indicates, current levels of benefit payments in Australia are nowhere near adequate in relation to these figures on the minimum costs of children.

At this stage the Institute has not surveyed families to discover costs of all the items relating to children. We also have not entered the debate on whether to include in costs of children the amount of wages foregone by the custodial parent. Nor have we attempted to formulate a poverty line or lines. Such an exercise would involve examination of a wide diversity of family values and lifestyles.

Some of the important costs not yet examined are housing, child care, school fees, transport, phones, or medical and dental costs. The initial outlays a family makes, for example, the setting up costs of accommodation, a new baby, a child starting school, are not costed.

Finally, it should be pointed out that although children have always been a cost it was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that they ceased to be an economic asset in Western countries. Previously children were an investment as an extra unit of labour and as security in old age.

In today's society which requires a well-trained labour force, the dependency of many children has extended to the end of secondary schooling. It is thus imperative that governments recognise the changes that have occurred and that they take steps to enable families to cope with these increased costs.

One of the ways in which the Institute hopes its Cost of Children Study will be useful is in assisting the Family Court to set levels of maintenance. The Institute has set up a pilot study to examine existing maintenance decisions and the processes by which orders are made,

Table 3.11 Clothing costs in $A per week

8-11 year old boy *Piachaud items*	*Qty*	*1981 av. cost*	*1983* low cost*
Overcoat (½) Anorak	(1)	13.99	16.00
Shoes	(2)	40.00	40.00
Sneakers	(1)	30.00	28.00
Socks	(4)	6.00	4.00
Singlet	(1)	2.00	2.40
Underpants	(3)	4.50	6.00
Trousers/Jeans	(2)	36.00	20.00
Shorts	(1)	5.00	4.00
Shirts (long & T-shirts)	(3)	18.00	20.00
Sweaters	(2)	18.00	14.00
Pyjamas	(1)	9.00	12.00
Total cost		182.50	166.80
Cost per week		3.51	3.20

8-11 year old boy *Cottage mothers, Victoria, items*	*Qty*	*1981 cost*
Vests	6	1.50
Underpants	8	1.50
Socks	8	.99
Trousers	2	15.00
Shorts	4	5.00
Jeans	2	15.00
Shirts	4	5.00
Skivvies	4	5.00
T-shirts	4	5.00
Pyjamas	3	5.00
Shoes	1	18.00
Runners	1	12.00
Thongs	1	3.00
Gumboots	1	8.00
Dressing Gown	1	15.00
Track Suit	1	15.00
Bathers	1	5.00
Jumpers	3	5.00
Cardigan	2	9.50
Gloves	1	3.00
Hat	1	3.00
Belts	2	3.00
Anorak	1	9.50
Raincoat	1	12.00
Estimated initial outlay	=	350.00
Cost per week	=	6.73

* These 1983 prices were lower than normal as they were from the lowest cost retail outlets in Melbourne at the time of the annual winter sales.

using a randomly selected sample of 500 cases from the population of those granted decrees nisi by the Family Court in 1981. Preliminary analysis of the data shows that maintenance orders are usually precise in dollars per week, but are not specific about the payment of health and education expenses (see Chapter 2).

Although the court files are not always specific about all maintenance provisions, they are a rich source of information on patterns of property and maintenance settlements made or sanctioned by the court. This study should provide a description of current court practice in making maintenance orders which will relate the content of orders to factors such as the age of children and the income of the parents. The combination of information on current practice and an index of the actual cost of children will provide useful data for family law policy makers.

Table 3.12 Incomes, benefits and allowances, Australia, June 1983

Average weekly earnings		Person	Males	Females
June 1983		$336.30	$358.30	$286.80
Spouse Rebate for taxpayers with dependent spouse and children is $1030 per year or $19.80 per week				
Sole Parent Rebate for taxpayers with dependent children is $780 per year or $15 per week				
Supporting Parent's Benefit with all possible allowances (May 1983 values)		one child under 6 years		two children (one under 6 years)
		$115.61		$133.12
Unemployment Benefit + $10 for extra child (will be updated to $12 Nov. 1983)	Single	Single with one child	Married	Married + one child
	$68.65	$92.35	$137.30	$147.30
Family Allowance	$5.26 per week for one child $12.77 per week for two children i.e. $6.39 per child $21.77 per week for three children i.e. $7.26 per child			
Social Security, Child Allowance & Family Income Supplement	$10.00 per week per child (after November 1983 will be $12 per child)			
Guardian's Allowance	$6.00 per family or $8.00 per family if child under 6 or invalid. (after November 1983, guardian's allowance will be $8.00 for all eligible families)			

Housing

Table 3.13 shows Australia has a particularly high proportion of home ownership by world standards. However, the table also suggests there is no simple relationship between proportion of home ownership, level of affluence or political form, as is often suggested. Many of the most affluent countries of the world, for example Switzerland, West Germany and Sweden, have low levels of home ownership, and some of the poorer ones, for example Turkey, Yugoslavia, have high proportions of ownership. Similarly, there are socialist countries with high rates of ownership, such as Yugoslavia, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and capitalist countries such as England, Sweden, West Germany with lower rates. This suggests that, firstly, each country will have certain specific cultural, economic and policy characteristics that structure a housing context particular to that country, and secondly, that one must guard against universal truths in housing, i.e., that home ownership is inherently superior or public housing is inherently inferior.

The dominance of home ownership in Australia does not come about through random factors but rather reflects a major policy commitment to this tenure form at the expense of the two other major tenure forms, private rental and public rental.

The Institute has contracted a study of housing issues to three researchers, Terry Burke, Linda Hancock and Peter Newton. The study, which is being prepared for publication, looks at trends in Australian family structures and their implications for housing; developments and issues in the provision of public housing; and the causes of the housing problems of young people and policy options to address these problems. The major findings of this study are outlined in more detail below.

Table 3.13 Percentage of households owning own home: international comparison

Turkey	81.4	Norway	52.9
Yugoslavia	70.7	Italy	50.8
Ireland	68.8	Austria	49.4
Australia	67.3	Denmark	47.0
Hungary	62.9	Portugal	44.5
USA	62.9	France	43.3
Canada	60.0	England	43.0
Japan	58.2	Sweden	35.2
Belgium	58.9	West Germany	33.5
Czechoslovakia	50.3	Switzerland	28.5

Source: G. Kurian, 1980, *The Book of Rankings*, Macmillan Reference Table 235. Data refers to period 1973-76.

A second study has been contracted to the Centre for Urban Research and Action (CURA). It aims to examine the social impacts of economic changes in the housing market, particularly rising interest rates, on family membership, material well-being and stability; and to examine the relationship between the family cycle, wealth and housing. Work done to date includes a random sample survey of 294 householders, intensive case studies of 12 families, a survey of the literature and re-analysis of statistical data collected for the Victorian Ministry of Housing to examine the housing situation of four sub-groups of applicants for home loans. The four groups drawn from the Ministry's Home Finance Survey by CURA are those whose loan applications were rejected, those with zero equity in their home, low income applicants for loans, and those who received equity assistance from family or friends. Cross tabulations of CURA's survey data are being prepared, while the write ups of the analysis of other apsects of this study are in draft form.

Families and Housing

The first study outlines the dominant trends in Australian family structures and the implications for housing:

- the decline in the numerical importance of the traditional nuclear family and the growth of childless households;
- increasing divorce rates and a growth in single-parent families;
- the ageing of the population.

Burke and his co-authors suggest that owner-occupied housing is not as flexible in response to separation and divorce as rental housing because of problems of property settlement; delays and costs associated with the sale of the dwelling and, where property values have fallen, actual loss of wealth by virtue of the need to sell as part of the divorce proceedings.

The study shows how changes (between 1971 and 1981) in interest rates and house prices, relative to average earnings, have led to an increase in the number of years of saving required by Melbourne average wage earners, and dual-wage families, for an average priced house.

The report points out that there are marked differences between states (and capital cities) in the 'affordability' of housing and suggest that uniform national housing policies, such as the home deposit assistance scheme, may be inappropriate. 'To offer the same subsidy to purchasing families in Adelaide as in Sydney is to deny the regional inequalities in housing opportunity.'

The private rental sector has been neglected both in terms of research and policy but for some groups, particularly those under 30 and those on low incomes, the private rental sector plays a dominant role in determining the availability of accommodation. The study shows the increasing difficulty facing these groups in the private rental market, particularly in Sydney and Melbourne. For young persons who are unemployed or on Tertiary Education Assistance Scheme (TEAS), for example, even sharing does not enable much housing choice. In June 1981, a household of two unemployed persons and two TEAS students, to keep their housing costs to one third of the combined incomes, and to enable them to have a bedroom each, would require renting a four bedroom dwelling for $68 a week or less. In June 1981, only nine per cent of four bedroom properties advertised in Melbourne had rents less than $68 per week, while in Sydney the relevant proportion was two per cent.

The study notes the increasing incidence of ownership of flats and caravan park dwelling, and points out some of the policy dilemmas. While reforms to permit construction of more multiple-occupancy housing enable some containment of urban sprawl, provide cheaper housing and so on, such reforms also have the inherent danger of providing, by virtue of being cheaper, housing forms for the unemployed and low paid which trap such households in lifestyles they neither desire nor need.

Public Housing

The second part of the Institute's commissioned study of housing issues looked at public housing.

Public housing programs have undergone some marked changes in the last two decades. The report describes the changes in federal funds for public housing, notably major boosts in the Labor budgets of 1973-1975, and sharp reductions which occurred in the years following. Some States, particularly Victoria, have substantially increased the amount of State government funds allocated to public housing. The nature of the accommodation provided has changed from the flats which characterised capital city construction in the 1960s and early 1970s, to less concentrated estates and spot purchase programs. Most States have sought to put major emphasis on building up the public housing rental stock.

Eligibility conditions for public housing now mean that nuclear families with one person working are a much smaller proportion of public housing occupants than they were in the 1950s and 1960s. Pensioners, particularly single parents, and emergency allocations now represent very large proportions of Commission tenants. Because income limits are more widely used to determine eligibility for public housing accommodation, and because rent formulae put financial pressure on higher income groups to move out, the proportion of tenants needing rent rebates has increased substantially, causing financial difficulties for the public housing authorities and leading to high concentrations of low income families on large estates. Some housing estates have poor access to employment and other urban resources.

Some State authorities have sought to increase substantially opportunities for tenant participation in estate management and public housing policies.

The report asserts that the size of the waiting list understates the extent of housing needs. There are many families in situations similar to those on waiting lists who do not apply due to lack of information on their entitlements, a reluctance to deal with bureaucracy, or because they do not want to live in public housing. Others are deterred from applying because of waiting times ranging from 18 months to 4 years.

While studies of youth homelessness have identified the need for governments to consider the role they should play in housing younger people, the report points out that, if eligibility is extended to youth then, without additional funds, public housing authorities would find themselves having to trade off assistance among the range of family types currently supported in order to introduce a youth program. By so doing, the State could also play a significant role in promoting the further growth of households of young people living away from their parents.

The report criticises market rents policy, claiming that it 'ignores the variations that exist in household earnings over the life cycle of different households'. While a household may have an income above average weekly earnings while members are employed they may need assistance late in their working life (particularly blue collar workers) and when they retire.

Issues in Youth Housing

The third aspect of the housing study reports an apparent trend, since the late 1970s, for increasing numbers of young people to be 'sleeping out' or seeking assistance from welfare agencies. It is suggested that homelessness among young people is indicative of much more general economic and social problems affecting youth. These factors include:

- The young person's economic situation. Youth unemployment, uncertainty of income maintenance benefits and low levels of benefit, together with crisis factors such as loss of a job, loss of benefits, the waiting period for benefits and unexpected expenses are important contributory factors to homelessness and unsatisfactory housing conditions.
- The housing market. Factors here include the shortage of private rental accommodation, high establishment costs (rent in advance, bond, etc.), landlord and estate agent prejudice against young people, lack of government funding for medium to long term accommodation for youth.
- The young person's social situation. Homelessness can be a result of a breakdown in a young person's support network, problems arising from a move to a new area for work or study reasons, inability to cope with family, personal or social stress and alcohol or drug problems.
- Family circumstances. Chronic family disharmony, family breakdown. parental alcoholism, family financial problems can themselves be a reflection of changing attitudes of Australians towards marriage, fertility and family formation, the increasing proportion of 'non-standard' households (many of whom are under severe economic strains), and a trend away from the traditional family model.

This study mainly focuses on the first three of these factors contributing to youth homelessness and housing difficulties, and examines existing government programs which are, or could be, directed to the assistance of youth.

The study calls for improved income security programs for youth, young people to be given access to government funded housing, an on-going scheme for emergency and medium term youth accommodation, and policies to expand the amount of private market rental housing affordable to youth. Policies to assist and prevent homelessness should recognise the special needs of youth, particularly their general immaturity, lack of financial resources and general need for some adult support.

In the course of preparing the paper, the authors found several issues in the areas of youth housing, income maintenance and family support services which require further research, including:

- family conflicts precipitated by youth unemployment or the unemployment of another family member;
- changes in the age at which youth aspire to leave home;
- the role of family support in the process of youth's transition to independent living;
- the effect on youth of family mobility and increased family isolation;
- opportunities for youth employment and housing in an area of high youth concentration.

Conclusion: Further Research on Families and the Economy

The Institute clearly has considerable work in the year ahead if it is to successfully finish off and disseminate research projects it has already commenced. Development of the Australian Family Database and its use for analysis of policy options, the Cost of Children Study and development of policy proposals for setting of maintenance, family allowances, etc, and overseeing the completion of housing studies will require a substantial proportion of the Institute's policy staff time.

Three new research topics are proposed for the year 1983-84, however. The Institute plans to undertake a research project on youth incomes and education, to examine the impact of work and unemployment on family functioning, and to seek outside research assistance to conduct studies on factors influencing the use of child care services.

The proposed youth incomes and education study will gather data on the sources and distribution of income within families containing 16-18 year olds; the extent to which independent income from part-time employment affects schooling and work decisions; and the possible impact of policy proposals regarding a youth guarantee, increased secondary allowances, etc.

The work-family interface will be a major topic on the Institute's follow-up questionnaire to the families first interviewed in the 1981 Family Formation Study. Issues under consideration include, for two earner, one earner and one-parent families, and for people without children, the nature of sex-based roles, the impact of shiftwork, part-time work and unemployment on family time and family finances, and the role of child care in employment decisions and family functioning.

Child care is a topic that merits examination in its own right, however, and the Institute commissioned a study by Deborah Brennan on children's services (see Chapter 4). It is also hoped to commission one or more studies on the relative influence of cost, accessibility, flexibility and suitability of child care on the decisions of parents to use particular types of formal and informal child care arrangements, and the impact of factors like ethnicity, income and family type on these decisions.

4

Family Support

Family Support Network Study 74
Community Based Services 75
Children's Services 78
Marriage Support Services 88

The Institute's research has looked closely at the issue of 'family support' and we are now in a position to clarify some of the factors that help or hinder family survival.

Individuals and members of families rely on a variety of informal and formal resources to provide information, assistance, support, advice and solace both at times of crisis and during ordinary day to day living. Support can take the form of practical assistance or be an emotional response. Practical assistance may include providing child care, lending or giving money, caring for a sick member, locating housing, or helping to find a job. Emotional support can take the guise of listening to or resolving marital problems, relieving loneliness, or just being there to share the joys and sorrows of everyday family life.

Many people turn to informal networks such as other family members, friends, neighbours or the boss at work. Others may rely on voluntary community organisations or self help groups. In times of need families may reach out to more formal services provided by the government. These resources include, among others, homemaking assistance, financial counselling, and emergency housing provided under the umbrella of various family support service schemes or marriage counselling services subsidised under the *Family Law Act*. Day care centres and early childhood education programs are other examples of family support services.

Many special schemes such as the Family Support Services have been designed to assist families in times of crisis or special need. Other programs are targeted to 'at risk' families only.

Especially during times of government financial restraint, the view is often taken that families should 'look to their own' or that voluntary agencies should provide the necessary assistance.

The argument takes many forms and assumes that all families are the same and/or have equal resources to cope with their 'family problems'. It assumes, for example, that children are the family's responsibility so parents (usually mothers) should provide for child care; that ageing parents should be looked after by 'the family' and not placed in hospitals or rest homes; that divorce is caused by couples themselves, so the costs of breakup should be carried by them, or the 'offending party', and not covered by 'supporting parent benefits' or pensions; that a retarded or handicapped child is 'the family's problem', so the public should not have to pay for special appliances for them or medical care or short term holiday relief for parents.

The basic assumptions behind the view that families should look after their own members are:

- that everyone has a family of some kind that can give support;
- that their families have the money, time, ability and willingness to help when needed;
- that families live close enough to one another to help when called upon;
- that the family exists in some sort of vacuum, unaffected by economic and political circumstances, or by regional variations or by changing demands on their resources as they go through stages of the life cycle;
- that the public, the government, the community have no responsibility to assist those in need or to ensure that all families have some basic level of public support.

Clearly these assumptions are open to challenge. Many people have no family, either of their own making or the wider 'extended' family of relatives who could give help when needed. They may live alone, may be migrants whose families have not come with them, may be old, widowed, divorced and so on.

Nor does every family have the money to support unemployed children or parents, the time to offer child care, to do household repairs, to help look for jobs for other relatives. There is a basic minimum level of income without which families cannot be expected to 'help their own' whether they be a handicapped child, an unemployed teenager, a divorced sister or an aged and ailing parent.

Further, it is naive to assume that every family is a big happy clan, getting on well together, always ready to muck in. Marriage creates divisions as well as unions, separations between people and their parents, in-laws, friends, their interests, pre-occupations and locations. There is a 'dark' side to family life which should not be forgotten, and no amount of exhortation, certainly no policy dictates, can hope to turn every family into a mutual help society.

Frequently new families move away to live and work apart from their families of origin. Telephone links and visits may still be important but a young family isolated from grandparents or other relatives and old friends must look to their new neighbourhood and workplace for friendships and support. Some neighbourhoods are better than others in this regard. If all the neighbours are old, or out at work during the day or unfriendly, it is harder to build up relationships to call upon in times of need. Most people of course do manage to build these networks, new friends, acquaintances, workmates, who play an important part in enriching everyday life. We often forget how important such contacts are as 'support' for family life, because no money or formal services are exchanged. You hear things, learn about jobs, pre-schools, where to buy things cheaply, who may have some leftover paving bricks, which local GP is the most understanding etc. from informal contacts over the back fence, at the local shops, the infant welfare centre or the football club. A neighbour looks after your dog, helps build a barbecue, watches your children when you rush off to the doctor, but we fail to think of these as 'family supports'.

There is a danger though, and there has been a tendency in recent years for governments to believe, that these informal networks of local support can be treated as substitutes for formal governmental income and advisory support.

A balance must be struck between voluntary, unpaid, taken-for-granted family and community support and more formal State social services which can provide specialist help on a consistent and reliable basis to all, regardless of the wealth or power of the communities they serve.

We wish to assert that all families will be better off the more they are linked into well developed family and neighbourhood networks. Equally, all families have basic needs not only for a basic minimum income but also for a minimum standard of formal services in such areas as health, education, information, recreation, transport and so on. Most families will at some time or another require extra assistance due to illness or disability, loss of a job, money and housing problems, family conflict, etc. In fewer cases such problems will come together at the same time so family needs for both formal services and informal help will be acute. The crucial task is to find the best mix of both formal services and informal support systems.

Thus our further assertion is that families, local communities and governments should share the responsibility of maximising the well-being of individuals and families. Government's role is to develop a wide range of alternative services so that families can choose what is best for them. Because such policies and programs should stress support for families rather than substitutes for family functions, they must involve sharing in decisions and choice from a variety of options.

Obviously family needs for extra resources vary and change over the life cycle. Some families will need long term help, for example, if someone has a chronic disability, though it may take the form of occasional financial assistance, home help, short term care to allow shopping, outings and holidays. Short term services that are flexible and innovative may in fact be more successful in sustaining the family unit because they offer relief from the tensions of full-time caring, isolation and entrapment.

In recent years special schemes such as the Family Support Services Scheme have been designed to assist families in times of special need.

Financial counselling, homemaker aides, emergency housing, advice on coping skills in times of personal crisis are all of value. Some cause for concern exists, however, about the way these services are delivered. Because funds are limited, 'rationing' devices have to be worked out, but the criteria for eligibility are often vague and open to question. For example, the notion of 'at risk' families is imprecise and runs a fine line with elements of labelling and stigma. A related problem is that if such services are provided to separate families in a privatised way and in isolation from the resources of informal social networks or more universally available services, those families may become more dependent and more privatised rather than developing greater autonomy within a caring community context.

Thus formal family support services need to be universally available to all families who by their own definition need to use them, with specialist resources being available as back-ups when required.

Our underlying value position can be simply stated. We believe that individuals and families should have a maximum choice to pursue their goals through informal or formal networks or through a combination of these.

The Institute has undertaken a number of projects related to how families use support networks and the nature of community services available to assist families. The focus is on the interface between the needs of families and the suitability of such services.

Family Support Network Study

This study was designed to find out:

- the degree to which, and the purposes for which, families draw on informal support networks;
- the characteristics of these informal support networks and the factors influencing these characteristics;
- the nature of the relationship between informal support networks and formal agencies of service delivery;
- the implications of the findings for current debates about social policy and social welfare.

In the first stage of this study, a random sample of 416 families was selected in the Geelong area. In each case, one respondent from a family, aged 18-60, was interviewed using a structured interview schedule, with several open-ended questions. In addition, a series of in-depth case-study interviews was carried out, using respondents selected from the original sample to cover the following groups: migrant families, single parent poor families, two-parent poor families, two-parent non-poor or comfortably off families and families severely affected by unemployment.

The study focused on selected needs which most families were likely to have experienced: getting a first job, coping with unemployment in the family, setting up a first home, coping with a serious illness and coping with personal and emotional upsets. In this situation we investigated the sources of help and the kinds of help given and received.

Findings

The single most striking finding of the study was one which, while hardly surprising, needs stating. Contrary to the predictions of those who see the welfare state as a threat to family support networks, most people prefer most of the time to cope with problems within their informal networks, or to use a combination of informal resources and formal agencies.

In all the situations listed above, between one third and one half of the families had relied entirely on their informal networks. Leaving aside 'getting first job', another quarter to one third had used a combination of informal networks and formal services. Fewer than one in ten families had relied only on services.

More detailed findings are to be found in the First Report to Respondents titled *Social support in an Australian community*. This is a descriptive report intended for the respondents and the many people in Geelong who helped us and who are interested in the study.

Further work remains to be done, first by way of further analysis of our own data, second by way of examining some of the implications of points raised here.

We have repeated the survey in the Northern Territory where families are likely to be more isolated from their traditional family supports, and also in an inner city Sydney suburb where families are less well off, more mobile and subject to urban pressures. These contrasting sample areas should show us how Australian families are coping, how strong or weak are their informal networks and how well the more formal services currently available to families are meeting their needs.

Community Based Services

The development of support services for families has been characterised by an emphasis on locating these within local communities. The Institute commissioned two Policy Background Papers to analyse this trend — one by Jim Alexander on Family Support Services and another by Deborah Brennan on Children's Services.

Alexander's paper, titled *Services to families: with many a slip*, documents the rationale and implementation of the Family Support Services Scheme (FSSS) first set up in 1978 within the Department of Social Security's Office of Child Care. This program funds activities such as emergency accommodation, financial counselling and homemaker aides, usually on the basis of submissions from local groups and local government. Alexander contends that only in Victoria was there an adequate existing regional infrastructure to give focus to the program and other States tended to 'innovate' in their own ways. The result was a dilution and diffusion of the original aims, a tendency to rely on unpaid voluntary labour and (because of submission funding) a tendency for those most in need to miss out on funding.

His report is critical of the piecemeal efforts that resulted and of the ideology of 'self-help' which weighs most heavily on women serving as volunteers in the community. He suggests that the original notion of preventative 'family support services' came to be lost in the rush to gain a share of limited funds, so that 'crisis intervention' came to characterise the whole scheme. Alexander's report is critical of the ease with which governments have distorted the desirable goal of 'community development' using local networks and relying on local decision making, and turned this into an excuse for cutting funds, ignoring their central planning responsibility to ensure equity and privatising what should be a public problem.

In the series of Family Impact Seminars run by the Institute to discuss the Alexander and Brennan reports, some State administrators challenged Alexander's assertions and what they saw as its 'centralist' assumptions. A careful reading will show, however, that he is urging, as is the Institute, a balance between the state's responsibility for services in support of families and the power of local communities to determine and choose the service they need and wish to use.

Moreover, both Alexander and Brennan highlight the vagueness, the imprecision of notions of 'family services' or 'children's services'. Such loose policy development leaves room for distortion and diffusion of goals, means services are provided haphazardly and often more as a result of skilful lobbying than real need, and leaves program funding vulnerable. Deborah Brennan's report is aptly titled *Toward a national child care policy*. She argues no such coherent policy exists, but is desperately needed. Her report is important because it documents State by State differences in the spread of pre-school and child care services, thus showing the importance of federal initiatives in this area.

Table 4.1 shows the labour force participation rate for mothers of young children varies from 37.9 per cent in Tasmania to 53.7 per cent in the Northern Territory. It also shows that fewer women responsible for children under six years are in the paid labour force and the significant increase in their participation rate once all children are of school age.

Government statistics shows that 85 per cent of Australian children have access to pre-schools. Yet only 3.5 per cent of families have access to other forms of child care. Several important policy implications flow from this. Pre-schools are usually only 'sessional' so do not meet the needs of working mothers. Schools rarely provide before or after school care and families have to devise very complex arrangements in order to ensure proper supervision. There is a hiatus, if not hostility, between 'early childhood educators' and the advocates of 'child care' or 'day care'. Training courses rarely integrate these two closely related areas. Resources are diffused, scattered and (for child care) above all costly. Many working couples or lone parents can barely afford child care costs, yet their participation in the workforce is both desirable for the Australian economy, frequently essential for basic family survival, and is the only way for them to 'stay off welfare'. The lack of adequate public funding for early childhood services is to be deplored and, far from supporting family life, makes it even more difficult for families to function well. Brennan raises another major issue in the debate on child care — that the interests of children are at stake and not only the needs of working mothers. The Institute agrees with that position and wrote a major submission on the matter to the Victorian Government Review of Early Childhood Services, on which we report in later pages of this chapter.

Before doing so, it is important to sum up the implications of the above-mentioned policy papers on children's and family support services. The papers were the focus of a new series of Family Impact Seminars in the State capitals in June-July 1983. The Seminars, titled 'Community Based Services for Children and Families' illustrate the Institute's approach to policy development and advice.

In each State, the seminar was arranged in co-operation with the relevant government department, usually the Department for Community Welfare. The seminar was opened by the Minister and an official paper commenting on and critically examining the Institute's papers was presented by the Director-General. Non-government service agencies also presented prepared papers suggesting whether the views put by the Institute were appropriate or not to that State's approach to family services and local circumstances. Each seminar was open to the public and provided for audience comment and participation. They attracted large audiences and in total close to a thousand people attended, making their impact quite significant. Our goal was to challenge, provoke, raise the level of the debate.

Table 4.1 Labour force participation rates of persons responsible for pre-school and primary school aged children, by States and Territories

	Labour force participation rate			
	Responsible for children under 6 years %	*Responsible for children aged 6-11 years and some under 6 years* %	*Responsible only for children aged 6 to 11 years* %	*Responsible for any children under 12 years* %
New South Wales	32.7	47.7	55.5	42.0
Victoria	36.3	51.1	57.1	45.2
Queensland	32.1	47.1	54.6	41.2
South Australia	31.5	45.9	53.8	41.2
Western Australia	33.8	49.8	57.1	43.5
Tasmania	30.0	44.4	50.0	37.9
Northern Territory	43.3	66.3	70.2	53.7
ACT	33.3	60.0	73.4	48.4
Australia	33.6	48.8	56.1	42.9

Certainly the discussions were provocative. In some States, the Institute's Geelong study on family support networks was seen as playing into the hands of those who want to reduce the level of public provision; in others it was seen as offering important guidelines for better provision of localised services drawing upon existing support networks. In some States the 'Alexander-Brennan line' was seen as 'anti-community', 'centralist planning', 'doctrinaire'; in others it struck a responsive chord in those whose funding had been cut back by governments short of funds. Some people felt the topic was 'old hat', already outdated and unimportant; others regarded the seminar as a timely reminder of the central issues, an important contribution to current planning initiatives.

From our perspective then, these policy background papers and associated public seminars were most successful. They brought the Institute's work to public and political attention, they generated new lines of thinking, they challenged several current themes of 'accepted wisdom'. At this point the Institute of Family Studies cannot tell governments or their departments what should be done. Indeed that is always a political decision and must be made by those with electoral and administrative responsibility. But we can indicate the facts, we can point to anomalies in policies that affect families, we can improve political, bureaucratic, and public understanding of changes in family life that must be taken into account in planning and policy development. Our Family Impact Seminars are a vital means towards that end.

What emerges from these papers and seminars on community based services can be summarised as follows. The Institute hopes that the positive outcomes of the development of community based services for children and families will be:

- that services are sensitive to particular needs of the communities in which they are located;
- that the many services provided become part of an integrated and comprehensive system within the local area;
- that access to such services contributes to the alleviation of social inequality and to the enhancement of opportunities for individuals and families with few resources;
- that those whose needs are greater, or in some way requiring extra or specialist resources, are able to be assisted without being stigmatised or losing their independence;

- that provision of localised services is planned in such a way as to ensure high priority to areas requiring greater assistance.

If these potential outcomes were to be realised the well-being of many of the families now experiencing great difficulties would be enhanced. There is also a need to focus on potentially adverse outcomes of the current trend towards community based services. As with all policy developments there are unintended effects as well as alternative outcomes which are hidden by the rhetoric that invariably surrounds any government program.

While the Institute regards the development of services at the local level as a positive step, it sees the following issues as potentially damaging outcomes which must be recognised and efforts made to avoid. These include:

- the shifting of costs of care on to the private sphere of families and communities;
- the concentrating of these costs on vulnerable groups, especially low income families and women, both within families and within communities;
- the fragmentation of services and their distribution without accounting properly for need;
- the avoidance of resolution of more fundamental policy issues in the areas of economic management, income security, housing etc;
- the swamping of preventative approaches by the need for crisis alleviation.

At all times the limitations of personalised services to families must be recognised.

The concentration on personalised services at the local level may have the outcome of directing attention from needs in the more fundamental policy areas of employment, income security, health and housing. To illustrate, financial counselling cannot make up for a fundamental lack of income any more than an accommodation referral service can produce more houses. It can be seen as something of a paradox for governments to be supporting the development of personalised services to individuals and families at local levels while ignoring the impact on communities and families of inadequate policy development in areas of economic management and provision of basic services such as housing, income support and pensions.

The Institute hopes that the move towards increasing community participation in the design and development of services to families will continue.

The long term hope is that individuals and families would have available to them those services they themselves decide they need to use. The underlying principle should be one of increasing the choices people have. Specialist resources should be provided as back-ups to readily available general services. The crucial task, and one which will probably vary from community to community, is to find the most appropriate mix of formal and informal services. In this way families, communities and governments may share the responsibility of providing support.

Children's Services

As indicated earlier, the Brennan policy paper on a national child care policy identified a blind spot in the current debate — that is, that child care is too often presented, and attacked, on the basis that it serves the needs of 'working women'. On the positive side, this means that with better child care provision, women will have better options, the freedom to choose to be employed outside the home or not without the worry of their children being inadequately looked after. On the negative side, such women are portrayed as selfish, neglecting mothers who should stay at home and care for children — child care being portrayed as an inducement to neglect 'household duties'. Such a dichotomy in our view obscures a more important rationale for public provision of adequate children's services. This is that child care (broadly defined) is good for children.

It is needed not just to help working women but as an important support for families in all sorts of circumstances. Placed in the context of the changes in family structures and circumstances that are documented in this Report, this rationale is premised on the view that private care for children is *not* enough. Many families now, as in the past, do not have the basic resources (of time, energy, know-how, money and physical provisions) to guarantee their children's growth to full potential. So public provision of services for early childhood is needed if only in the sense of compensating for the lack of parental resources, or in the sense of teaching parents and other carers about the central importance of early childhood. Our emphasis, however, is not on a 'compensatory' model so much as on the desirability of quality care for all children.

We know that roughly half of the child's intellectual growth takes place in the first four years of life. Another 30 per cent occurs before age eight and the rest after that time. Such figures over-simplify the case but the immense capacity for growth in those early years cannot be denied. Yet we find 'education' provided universally only after age five or six, with little public concern for the grossly unequal home environments that have influenced children up to that point.

At the centre of any rationale for early childhood development must be the goal of producing competent people in control of their own lives. Control is the focus of all parent-child relationships and should be seen in the light of developing competence in children. It would seem obvious, though often forgotten, that the aim of bringing up children is to make them able to control themselves. Sooner or later Mum and Dad will be gone and the children, now grown up, will have to survive on their own abilities. They have to become competent individuals, able to think and act for themselves, decide what they want of life and choose the best ways of getting it. If they are too dependent upon parents or other people, they lack control of their own life, are pushed around, unable to choose whether to co-operate or stand alone, and likely to blame 'fate' or other people for their own misfortunes.

A central aspect of that sense of mastery, of control over the environment, is language. We are aware of the vast literature on language, reading skills and social class differences in both literacy and linguistic codes, but two central points remain: inadequate language skills handicap any child in our society for life; and the foundation for language skills is laid in the home in early childhood.

Language is learned in the family and it is language which gives us the ability to recall the past and speculate about the future. It is this symbolic capacity which enables us to predict, plan and hence more fully to master the environment. Young children learn the language of the particular cultural group to which their family belongs, but oral communication is only the start of mastery of the written code which often differs from the form of language used at home. Since it is reading which underpins success or failure in education, we need to look closely at which families lay a sound basis for later reading skills and which do not. But in doing so we must stress the broader social structures which limit access to essential resources for reading and which culturally devalue some group and family styles in favour of others. Research has shown that the children who most frequently fail to achieve competency with the written code are those from families who are poor. Since in Australia approximately 670 000 dependent children are living below or within 20 per cent of the poverty line, we need to ask what can be done to avoid their inbuilt disadvantage.

When researchers have looked at what factors contribute to success rather than failure in reading, we get a more balanced picture. One researcher, for example, investigated children who could read fluently when they started school. It was found that most, but not all, were of above average intelligence, their family size and level of parents' education varied widely, but *all* of their parents valued education. Those parents with little education wanted their children to have what they had missed; the well educated wanted their children to experience what they had themselves. The most important factor was that all these children in their pre-school years had an adult who was interested and available to talk and listen to them. Very few parents had tried to teach their children to read, but the mothers themselves read widely, used local libraries and there was always an adult who was willing to read to the child or answer questions. Some children had shown interest in the print environment of household products, advertisements on television etc., and had then graduated to books.

A recent study in Bristol in the United Kingdom also looked at young children starting school to see what home factors influenced learning to read. It boiled down to parental provision of the materials of literacy (books, papers, pencils) and the quality of verbal interaction with the child. As the study points out, 'those who enter school knowing most about literacy are the ones who have the greatest reading attainment at the age of seven'. This does not mean schools make no difference nor does it mean that what needs to be done is for all parents to provide materials and read, talk and listen to their children. We need to ask *why* some parents are unable to provide these materials and time for their children rather than merely assert that this should be done.

The answer directs our attention back to the structured inequalities of our society. Providing books and writing materials costs money and many families do not have money to spare from the competing priorities of providing food, paying the rent and heating their homes. Moreover, time availability and the energy levels needed may not be there when work for subsistence takes precedence over parent-child interaction. Even where such parents value education, the time for reading may not exist. Reading requires effort, parents' own reading ability may not be high and their own experience of schooling may well have been negative.

Add to this the fact that municipal libraries are often not available in lower income areas and that such places may be intimidating to the poor and uneducated, and it is small wonder that they and their children prefer to watch television. We might add that neither governments, nor broadcasters, nor education authorities recognise the importance of, or provide adequate funds for, quality children's television programs, so another key structural influence is allowed to ignore its responsibilities to early childhood development.

Thus the issue becomes not one of whether publicly funded early childhood services should replace parental care, but rather one of whether we can afford to neglect that human growth potential by leaving child care entirely in the hands of parents and their unequal family resources.

We can not here rehearse all of the arguments and research evidence about the contexts of early childhood development, but we can highlight some of the findings most directly relevant to complementing private contexts with more formal and publicly provided contexts for children to grow in.

Parents and Additional Caregivers

A key proposition about the child's optimum development is that continuity and consistency are essential elements of trust, a sense of meaning and predictability in the child's social environment, the development of a sense of control and an affirmation of the child's growing identity.

Yet notice what is implied here. First, continuity may not be possible because both settings and people change. With high occupational mobility, familiar home surroundings — the security of the back yard and one's own room — cannot be guaranteed. With marriage breakdown, desertion, separation and divorce, there is little chance for a child to trust, to make meaning out of the situation or to feel he/she is secure in the home and its social environment.

In short, large numbers of children do not grow up in the ideal, intact home with stable family role models, so the context of child development is changing. Parenting in such altered circumstances is difficult and requires support; child care providers, kindergarten and pre-school teachers, neighbourhood self-help centres must all face the challenge and adapt their methods to family and childhood needs.

What must also be asked, of course, is whether day care and pre-school centres in fact provide a satisfactory alternative (or supplementary) environment for such children.

Most of the controversy about this question revolves around notions of the mother's centrality to the child's sense of security and trust.

Opponents of formal child care claim that 'maternal deprivation', a loss of 'attachment' or 'bonding' to the mother figure result from placing the child with 'strangers' or 'external' caregivers. Usually, the work of John Bowlby is cited to support this view, but the powerful theories of Freud and Anna Freud lie behind it. Ironically, Bowlby's definition of attachment as 'the affectional tie that a child forms with an individual' implies that children can be attached to more than one individual, and he used day care children as the control group whose development he considered normal. As Brennan puts it in the Policy Background Paper commissioned by the Institute:

> The attempt to apply maternal deprivation theory to ordinary families in ordinary circumstances however has had bizarre consequences. For example, it has been estimated that between 20 per cent and 50 per cent of children surrendered to State institutions in New South Wales could have remained with their families if adequate child care facilities had been available. Likewise, the lack of child care facilities has meant that many migrants have been forced to send their children back to their home country until they reach school age.

Further, Brennan points out:

> The assumption that children's psychological development is essentially determined within the family (particularly by the relationship with parents) is by no means universally shared. The relationships which a young child forms with other children and with adults outside the family are accorded great significance in other cultures. Likewise the family's access to adequate income, housing, health and social services is seen as far more important to a child's upbringing than the twenty-four hour presence of a devoted mother.

A related fear has been that children may become more attached to their caregivers than to their mothers. There is no research support at all for this view.

In sum, it is our view that children could all benefit from wider attachments with alternate caregivers instead of exclusive contact with the mother in an often isolated and unstimulating home setting.

Related to this is our view that fathers and male figures in general should play a more active role in early child development.

The work of researchers, both in Australia and overseas, suggests that the father has been a forgotten figure in child development. Given that males have held the dominant power and authority positions within society for so long, it is extraordinary to have supposed their very presence and behaviour in the home were unimportant to children, or that their lack of presence in the home or day care centre may not matter.

To assume that the mother is the most important person in a child's life because she spends most time with it is clearly unsatisfactory, because it takes for granted the actual quality of interaction between mother and child. Mother may often be present without interacting with the child. Amount of time spent together is a poor predictor of the quality of an infant's relationship with either mother or father. The quality of interaction and sensitivity to what the infant signals is all-important. Researchers have found a few hours of pleasurable interaction was more conducive to strong attachments than unstimulating cohabitation with a harassed mother or an uncaring father.

Child care provides other authority figures which give the child variety in adult contacts within ongoing relationships. These other adults can be a source of security for children whose parents separate or when there are any difficulties at home, for example, illness of parents, family fights and disagreements, or the arrival of a new sibling. So child care and pre-school services are an essential part of providing contexts for all children in which they can expand their attachments beyond their parents(s) and learn how to relate to other significant adult models.

The Role of Peers in Early Childhood

Perhaps more important than the desirability of widening adult-child attachments is the vital necessity of peer contacts for the social development of children.

Because of the decline in family size, children have fewer siblings with whom to interact and many have no siblings. Where siblings are of the same sex, they may miss out on a close intimate interaction with children of the opposite sex and grow up knowing little of the opposite sex. Regular close peer relationships from an early age can compensate for this lack.

We wish to stress that social development *is* educational, that every child has a right and a need to grow in confidence, to acquire the competences necessary to master the varied and complex environment of life, and that children who are denied opportunities to contact adults other than their parent(s) and to associate with peers of mixed age and sex are placed at an enormous disadvantage, both in broad developmental terms and in more specific cognitive and educational terms.

No nation can afford to neglect its young. These early years are too vital to later growth potential to leave to the structured inequalities of family life. Just as schools are provided, free and compulsory to all, so too should opportunities for pre-school experiences in a properly designed and supervised environment be available to every child.

The educational aspects of child care can be summarised fairly succinctly.

Child care is inherently educational because:

- the child receives stimulation from interaction with adults other than parents;
- the child learns to share and cooperate with other children;
- the child learns to follow rules;
- the child is located in a varied and intellectually stimulating environment with a choice of a number of activities, many of which would not be provided in the average home;
- the child has access to stories and books which are the basis for learning to read. Schools begin teaching infants reading on the basis that they have had some handling of and access to books in the home. However, many children do not in fact have this opportunity and hence have great difficulty with the whole literacy area — reading, writing, spelling from the beginning of their school life. Child care can provide for these children in a way some homes can not (or do not) and give children a better start in education and chance in life. Those children who come from homes where books are part of their life will have this interest expanded and reinforced in child care;

- child care provides opportunities for varied experience and opportunities for children to gain satisfaction as they learn to predict and control the environment around them. It is an essential part of the development of competence.

The Institute aims to develop public awareness of these issues about early childhood because we feel the rights and needs of children, especially infants, are being neglected in Australia.

The Need for Alternative Child Care Arrangements

The neglect of the rights and needs of children can be seen readily from the following figures on families with children.

Of all families with dependent children in Australia, nearly 40 per cent had both parents (in the case of married couple families) or the parent (in the case of one-parent families) in the paid labour force in 1981. Of all families with dependent children, 9.6 per cent had no adult in paid work.

Of all family units in Australia with children under 12 years of age, just over half (52 per cent) contain at least one child who is under school age and therefore potentially in need of child care services. In 38.1 per cent of families both parents were employed, 21.5 per cent of these with at least one parent working only part-time. There were 1 304 000 children under 12 years of age in these families.

Of those family units with at least one child not at school, 58.6 per cent have only one parent employed, while in a disturbingly high proportion of families with children, no adult is working.

Of all employed married women, part-time workers comprise about 40 per cent. Indeed, the major growth area in employment has been in part-time work. Between 1971 and 1981 the number of women employed part-time increased by 78.2 per cent. The lack of adequate child care arrangements is one of the reasons women seek part-time employment, even though it is usually characterised by low security and few of the rights enjoyed by full-time workers such as superannuation, sick leave and long-service leave.

Table 4.2 shows the impact of having at least one child at school on the type of labour force participation families are forced to choose.

Table 4.2 Work status of family units with children under 12 years, Australia, 1981

Employment status	*All children not attending school*		*Some children at school, some not at school*		*At least one child not at school*		*All children at school*		*Total*	
	(000)	*%*	*(000)*	*%*	*(000)*	*%*	*(000)*	*%*	*(000)*	*%*
All parents employed F/T	46.6	40.9	37.3	32.2	83.9	36.5	183.8	47.7	267.7	43.5
All parents employed, one P/T	67.4	59.1	78.4	67.8	145.8	63.5	201.9	52.3	347.7	56.5
Total	114		115.7		229.7		385.7		615.4	100.0

Note: 'All parents' includes *the* parent in one-parent families.
F/T = full-time; P/T = part-time

Of those families where both parents were employed 56.5 per cent had one parent working part-time. The presence of a child not at school increases the likelihood that one parent will be a part-time worker while for those with all children at school only 52.1 per cent of families are characterised this way. The contrast is starker for those families with some children at school and some not at school where just over twice as many families (67.8 per cent) have one parent working part-time as have both parents employed full-time (32.2 per cent).

Table 4.3 shows how the trend has grown since 1969 for mothers of young children to enter the labour market once their children become of school-age.

While other factors are at work, one of the main reasons so many women find jobs once their children are at school and not before is because of the lack of child care available to them. The most recent study of discouraged workers in Australia has shown that 120 000 women would like a job if child care were available. A further 212 300 women stated that 'family considerations' was the major reason they were not actively seeking work.

Present Child Care Arrangements

If we look at child care arrangements in the light of the above figures on parental labour force participation, we can see how inadequate are current provisions in Australia. The Australian Bureau of Statistics 1980 survey on *child care arrangements*, indicates that very few families have access to organised child care services. Of 1 612 000 families surveyed in 1980 only 3.9 per cent used day care centres, family day care or commercial centres as their main form of care.

The children in those families using formal care represented 5.5 per cent of all children under 12 years. Nevertheless, the demand for child care services is remarkably high as only one-third of children are cared for exclusively by their mothers. Almost half a million children were looked after in informal arrangements — by relatives, friends, neighbours and others. In all, 46.2 per cent of families chose to use these private arrangements as their main form of care in 1980.

Costs of Care

Half of Australia's families pay nothing for child care; they either can not afford it or they rely on relatives and exchange arrangements with friends and neighbours. Of those who do pay for centre-based care, 47 per cent pay less that $5 per week while 44 per cent pay between $15-44 per week. There is a clear class distinction in both access to and use of child

Table 4.3 Labour force participation for persons responsible for children under the age of 12, by age groups, Australia

	Participation rate in labour force (percentage)				
	May 1969	*1973*	*1977*	*June 1980*	*Increase 1969-80*
Persons (mainly mothers) with					
Children — under 6 years	22	27	33	33	50
— 6-11 only	42	50	54	56	33
— under 12 years	29	35	40	43	48
All women	38	41	44	45	18

Table 4.4 Main type of care used by family units, Australia, 1980

Main type of care	*Family units* N (000)	%
Care by other(s) than person responsible		
a Informal care		
Spouse of person responsible	320.3	19.9
Older children	65.7	4.1
Other relatives	192.5	11.9
Other persons	165.5	10.3
Sub-total	744.0	46.2
b Formal care		
Pre-school	121.7	7.5
Centre	63.1	3.9
Sub-total	184.8	11.4
c By themselves	44.1	2.7
d Other	94.6	5.9
Total family units using care	1067.5	66.2
Care by person responsible only	545.0	33.8
Total	1612.5	100

Note: Centre care includes care at day care centres, family day care and commercial centres.

Table 4.5 Cost of care used by persons responsible for children not at school, Australia, June 1980

		Nil	*$1-4*	*$5-14*	*$15-44*	*$45+*	*Not stated*	*Total*
Pre-school		31 764	82 219	37 073	11 590	883	2 483	166 012
Centre care		12 056	31 723	13 175	18 705	1 547	1 864	79 070
Relative		174 703	1 126	3 780	6 691	538	11 467	198 305
Other person		71 924	4 973	17 320	26 235	2 913	7 841	131 206
Other		4 141	2 116	331	208	848	1 923	9 567
Total	N	294 588	122 157	71 679	63 429	6 729	25 578	584 160
	%	50.4	20.9	12.3	10.9	1.2	4.4	100

care services. Only 40.2 per cent of families earning a weekly income of $120-159 use child care, whereas 68.4 per cent of those families earning more than $300 per week use services. Moreover, the higher the income, the more they pay for care of their children.

In sum, for families with children not yet at school, 69.4 per cent use some form of child care arrangement, while 30.6 per cent use no child care, a total of 258 000 families (see Table 4.6). Of the 1 128 000 children below school age in Australia, only 5.5 per cent use either day care centres or family day care schemes as their main form of care. A further 12.5 per cent use pre-schools, giving a total of 18 per cent of children in this age group who use formal services as their main form of care. As Brennan puts it:

> What happens to the remaining 82 per cent? Almost half a million, or 44 per cent, are looked after by relatives, friends and neighbours. Slightly over one-third are cared for exclusively by their mothers. Alarmingly, 5 300 children below school age are left unattended.

Table 4.6 Families with children not at school, Australia, 1980

	(000)	%
Families using care	584.2	69.4
Families not using care	258.0	30.6
All families	842.2	100

The Institute does not regard this level of child care provision as in any way adequate to meet the needs of Australian families. As already indicated, the right and the economic need for women to work must be recognised, but this is only one aspect to be considered in arguing for better child care provisions.* The other major reason, we would argue, is that all children, in all families, would benefit socially, emotionally and educationally from contacts with their peers and alternative adult figures. We should not neglect these vital years in the development of competent future adults.

We feel governments at both state and federal level should be giving greater priority to those crucial years of early childhood development. We regret that the debate polarises round the issue of 'motherhood' rather than community responsibility to ensure maximum development of the cognitive, linguistic and social competence of children. We also regret that often the greatest supporters of early childhood education forget that goal by attacking child carers in an unseemly scramble for status and funds. We make the following suggestions about governmental responsibility for children's services.

Governmental Responsibility for Children's Services

The following suggestions relate to where the responsibilities for the provision of children's services should rest, or rather how those responsibilities should be apportioned between Commonwealth and State governments, and others involved.

The Australian government should maintain and extend its involvement in the provision of children's services

It is clear that the Australian government must maintain its involvement in the provision of early childhood services for three reasons. First, the overall level of provision must be increased. As society in general benefits from an investment in resources to improve the development of any generation of youngsters, it is reasonable that the broad community contribute to the cost. The most equitable way to spread such costs is through the taxation system and the Commonwealth government is therefore responsible for ensuring such an increase in the level of provision.

Second, only the national government can ensure that services across the country are provided at an appropriate developmental standard. Differences between States and between particular communities will mean that some children and families might have excellent services provided for them while others will have little or nothing. It is an important equity principle that *all* children and families should have access to high quality care. This can not be ensured if States or local communities are left to fend for themselves or if resources are allocated on the basis of those who are the most informed or best organised.

Third, there must be the opportunity for innovation and the meeting of special needs. In recent years groups representing Aborigines, migrant groups, disabled children and isolated communities have demonstrated that special consideration should be made in the provision of services to meet their particular needs. Similarly, quite different service needs have emerged apart from the standard child care and pre-school programs. Before and after school care, 24 hour overnight care, care in refuges etc. have been provided in an ad hoc way and have diverted much needed resources away from mainstream children's services. Instead of competing for committed funds, projects responding to emerging problems or new approaches should be able to be developed in their own right. As the development of any services such as these will not occur on a widespread basis, only the national authority is well-placed to disseminate the outcomes of new approaches.

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* Whether women work or not, access to adequate child care is essential for all at certain times of the daily round.

Provision of early childhood services should be the responsibility of a community services authority

The Institute is of the view that at both Commonwealth and State levels early childhood services should not be regarded as residual welfare services. The previous Commonwealth government, by insisting that subsidised services be targetted to those it deemed to be the 'most needy', thereby stigmatised both the services and the recipient families. The Institute believes that child care should be regarded as a basic service available to all families and should be administered as such. Consequently, there is a need for the machinery of government to reflect this mode of thinking.

At the Commonwealth level, there is good reason to suggest that the income support functions of the Department of Social Security (DSS) should be separated from the service provision function. A separate department specifically administering human services should be established, leaving DSS to concentrate on income support. The consequent break in function should eliminate the tendency of those providing goods or services to think in terms of 'worth' or to require proof of need on the part of service users.

The Institute regards the idea of a statutory authority such as a Children's Commission as having considerable merit, especially at the Commonwealth level. The advantages of such a Commission would lie in its ability to concentrate solely on carrying out its statutory responsibilities without having to compete for resources with other areas of a functional department such as Social Security. It is recognised that such a body must have resources to allocate as it sees fit and not be merely in an advisory or coordinating role. Consequently, as the Institute sees no immediate prospect of a separate Commonwealth Children's Commission being revived, it views the creation of a functional department with the responsibility of developing services programs as being the best practical option.

All levels of government — Commonwealth, state and local — should share the responsibility for providing high quality early childhood services

As mentioned, the Institute believes the Commonwealth government must significantly increase its contribution toward children's services. The Institute's Policy Background Paper by Brennan shows that the amount spent by the Commonwealth on such services was $380.5 million in the period 1974-80. This figure represented only 43 per cent of the target of $885 million originally suggested by the Social Welfare Commission in 1974. The Institute believes the Commonwealth should reintroduce funding programs on both capital works and in meeting recurrent costs on an indexed basis.

State governments have not been prepared to expend their own funds on child care although increasingly they have paid the bills for pre-school education. Whereas in 1975-76 the Commonwealth contributed 60 per cent of total national funding for pre-schools and the States 40 per cent, by 1981-82 the relative proportions were 25 per cent and 75 per cent respectively. Finally, if local government is to play the important delivery role envisaged for it by some, it must also examine the low level sporadic efforts it makes generally in contributing to children's services.

Marriage Support Services

The Institute of Family Studies has paid particular attention to the current status of marriage as an institution. Young Australians still wish to marry and express the hope that their marriages 'will last a lifetime'. At the same time, they are uncertain, dubious, worried, hesitant about taking the step towards marriage and many are choosing to live together informally rather than, or at least prior to, getting married. Those who are married try hard to make it work and there is no indication from the statistics of the duration of marriages which end in divorce that they break up a marriage lightly. Yet they often delay having children, struggle to set up house and establish careers before moving to the 'procreation' stage.

Our major Family Dissolution/Reformation Study of divorced persons suggests, too, that expectations of marriage are often unrealistic or not articulated clearly. The two major reasons given for divorce apart from difficult financial and employment circumstances, were 'infidelity' and 'my partner changed'. The Institute interprets both as symptoms of the same problem — a failure to understand the nature of inevitable change within marriage over time. Sexual compatibility and satisfaction in marriage is an affirmation of trust and intimacy, a symbol of the bond of love that seals modern marriage by choice. The ardour of early marriage inevitably becomes a warm glow of mutual companionship, and while this is understood and accepted by most, it is too often felt as a failure or rejection. So, too, is change inevitable in other ways: a partner takes a new job, a baby comes along and dominates the scene, a woman may return to college, unemployment may strike, people's motivations and priorities change just as do their age and physical appearance. Yet these changes are seen as another denial, a breach of trust, a growing apart, because many people are incapable of changing with or adapting to the change in their partner.

There is no easy solution to this failure to adapt and accept change. It is partly an educational problem. There is a vast unmet need for marriage preparation, advice and counselling. That alone will not solve marriage problems and that is why the Institute has chosen to develop the concept of 'marriage support' rather than to focus narrowly on 'guidance' or 'education' or 'family therapy'.

We have started first, however, with marriage support services that are currently available. In our view they are inadequately funded and often poorly conceptualised. The Institute has a long way to go in developing an alternative framework but some of our findings are indicative.

In 1981-82 marriage counselling agencies subsidised under the *Family Law Act* handled 31 162 cases and conducted 128 052 interviews throughout Australia.

Because overall statistics are not available, we do not know how many individuals or couples experiencing marital distress or contemplating divorce turn to private psychologists, psychiatrists, doctors, infant welfare sisters, lawyers, or other sources, for advice or counselling.

For some people, admitting to having a marital problem is unacceptable and marital distress is often disguised as a more acceptable problem such as a medical symptom. Counselling as such still has a stigma attached to it for many people. General practitioners report seeing increased numbers of patients where the underlying cause of complaints such as depression, 'nerves' or migraines is marital distress. Data from the Family Dissolution/Reformation Study showed that 11 per cent of respondents turned to a doctor for help during the process of marriage breakdown.

Infant welfare sisters, social workers, industry personnel officers and clergymen are frequent first contacts for people experiencing marital problems. Community workers such as the police are often involved in family disputes and youth workers and teachers are aware of family conflicts. Other people trust only institutional authorities such as the law to solve problems. Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB) located in many communities are considered a neutral 'door to knock on' by many people. In Victoria during June 1983, 1000 out of 6865 calls to CAB concerned a family or personal matter almost always related to marital problems.

One of the Institute's roles is to review current provisions and future needs in the areas of marriage counselling, pre-marital education and other marriage and family support programs. To fulfill this role the Institute has built into its long term research agenda as a major research subject area evaluation studies of programs which prepare people for marriage or which support them in marriage.

Evaluation refers to an examination of what is being done, its appropriateness in meeting community needs and how existing services could be improved or extended.

With this objective in mind, the Board of Management of the Institute decided that a portion of the Institute's 1982-83 Support Grant funds be allocated specifically for pilot studies evaluating the effectiveness of marriage counselling and other family life education programs. It was hoped that the proposals received would assist the Institute in determining priorities for future research in this area by highlighting those issues in evaluation of particular importance and interest to service providers and researchers.

While several worthwhile submissions were received, few focused on the issues of evaluation and effectiveness of marriage counselling. Others contained the genesis of innovative studies, but overall the proposals lacked clearly delineated descriptions of methodology.

Because the issues surrounding marriage counselling are complex and comprehensive studies require commitments of time, staff and funding, the Institute proposed to convene several Design Seminars about preparation and advice for families. The first was held in Melbourne in April 1983 and was attended by all the officially funded marriage counselling agencies. The objectives of the seminar were:

- to generate ideas and stimulate thinking about the current and potential role of marriage counselling organisations as community resources;
- to review the relationship of marriage counselling to other community resources;
- to assess current issues in marriage counselling research, evaluation and policy;
- to define Institute priorities for future research and policy recommendations.

Background to Government Provision of Services

Since 1960 the Australian government has been involved specifically in the provision of marriage counselling services through its subsidies to marriage counselling agencies approved by the Attorney-General's Department. In 1982 this subsidy amounted to 3.3 million dollars which was distributed among 22 organisations which operate 180 counselling centres. Pre-marriage education programs have received a subsidy amounting to approximately $50 000 per annum during the past three years.

Under the *Family Law Act*, the process of conciliation as well as reconciliation has been recognised. The Act provides for the availability of counselling and welfare staff to be appointed to the Family Court (S.37(8)) to assist the parties to consider reconciliation, and if reconciliation is ruled out, to assist the parties to reach agreement on property, custody and access issues in a conciliatory atmosphere that promotes a positive future outlook for the adults and children involved in marital dissolution (S.62(1)).

The *Family Law Act* thus provides subsidies to specialised marriage counselling agencies, services within multi-purpose agencies and established counselling facilities within the Family Court itself which can utilise the services of the specialised agencies where appropriate.

Specialised marriage counselling services funded through the *Family Law Act* are administered and monitored by the Special Services Branch of the Attorney-General's Department. Supervision and administration of this scheme involves pre-approval evaluation of agencies requesting a subsidy and post-approval monitoring of the agencies to ensure they continue to meet standards as set out in the Act and in statements of policy by the Attorney-General.

Collection and analysis of statistics related to the counselling activities of the agencies as required in the Act is another function.

Analysis of data by the Department is currently limited to information about caseload structure (e.g., whether interviews are joint or individual), where referrals come from (e.g., doctors, lawyers, media announcements), evaluation of outcome by client and counsellor, and expenditure and administrative details. No statistics are collected by the Department on socio-economic or demographic characteristics of clients so the data have limited relevance for the purpose of research. Department staff also would like to have the resources to disseminate information to agencies about new techniques in the field.

The Institute, as a result of discussion at the Design Seminar, agreed to develop a uniform data collection sheet which it is hoped will be adopted by all approved agencies and be incorporated into the statistical return required by the Attorney-General's Department. This would make possible a national profile of marriage counselling trends and client characteristics.

In line with the Institute's role in the initiation and encouragement of research, a primary objective of the Design Seminar was to ascertain priorities and issues for research in the marriage support area. These issues and research suggestions are contained in a paper being written for publication as a Policy Background Paper on marriage counselling services. In addition, a number of specific concerns were raised at the Seminar.

Definition of Marriage Counselling

The issue of what constitutes marriage counselling or how to define activities under the rubric of marriage counselling was explored. Some agencies feel constraints on the services they can offer resulting from the way marriage counselling is interpreted by the Attorney-General's Department. For agencies dependent on government funding, definitions have always been problematic since marriage counselling has never been legally defined in the *Family Law Act* beyond the mention that approved agencies should be 'willing and able to engage in marriage counselling' (S.12(2)(a)).

Specialised agencies see a broader spectrum of services as coming under the marriage counselling umbrella. Group counselling, marriage education or enrichment programs and family counselling are part of this spectrum. Pre- and post-divorce cases are seen to benefit from individual sessions perhaps more than joint interviews. Under present guidelines for funding these activities may or may not be considered eligible.

The 1981 amendments to the *Family Law Act* sought to clarify the issue by suggesting the following addition to Section 4(1):

'marriage counselling' includes the counselling of a person in relation to:

(a) entering into marriage;
(b) separation of the parties to a marriage;

(c) reconciliation of the parties to a marriage;
(d) the dissolution or annulment of a marriage; or
(e) adjusting to the dissolution or annulment of a marriage,

whether that counselling is provided in relation to the proposed marriage, marriage or former marriage of that person or in relation to the proposed marriage, marriage or former marriage of another person or other persons, and whether that counselling is provided to that person individually or as a member of a group of persons.

The proposed amendment appears to expand the definition of activities that may be funded and provided by approved agencies to clients. Certainly both pre-marital counselling and post-divorce counselling are accounted for as would be family counselling if this was part of 'adjusting to the dissolution' or 'reconciliation of the parties to a marriage' where children were part of the equation. (In this sense the work of marriage counselling agencies would perhaps overlap or intersect with the objectives of Family Court counselling).

Funded Activities Under Present Guidelines

According to present interpretation of the Act, activities that are excluded from reimbursement under the Act are individual psychotherapy, family counselling not related to the marriage relationship and counselling about health and welfare matters such as where to find accommodation or employment. An important distinction is made between counselling and education activities. General educational and informational activities are not funded under the current *Family Law Act* or Departmental policy guidelines since they are not considered to focus specifically on the marital relationship.

Multi-service agencies report that it is often difficult to isolate specific marriage counselling from other counselling and advice offered to clients who present with problems identified as something else. It may happen that marital difficulties are intertwined with financial or employment problems or trouble with children, and these more pressing issues have to be addressed within the marital relationship context if counselling is to be effective. This may result in a lot of shuffling around of clients and statistics within multi-service agencies in order to meet Departmental guidelines for funding. The Institute believes such artificial distinctions to be untenable and undesirable.

Part of the confusion appears to stem from an absence of clear policy guidelines concerning the definition of marriage counselling activities funded under the Act.

The Institute therefore suggests that to avoid confusion over what marriage counselling activities are encouraged and supported under the *Family Law Act*, implementation policies and regulations for approved marriage counselling agencies should be clearly set out in written guidelines.

Costs of Services

A related issue centres around the cost of marriage counselling services. Initially the approved agencies did not charge fees. To keep down costs, many agencies did and still do rely on the use of volunteer counsellors. Without the addition of trained volunteer counsellors, many agencies would not be able to offer counselling services at an affordable level to clients. For example, the Marriage Guidance Council of Western Australia relied on volunteer counsellors for 50 per cent of its counselling sessions in 1981.

It is a concern in many agencies that volunteer counsellors who have benefited from internal agency supervision and training to become highly skilled practitioners frequently leave for work in private practice or salaried organisations.

In the 1970s the Attorney-General's Department began to encourage the charging of fees although advising that no agency was to refuse a client because of the inability to pay. The recommended fee is about $15 a session.

Access to marriage counselling services for many clients probably depends on the sliding scale fees or absence of costs that government support allows. However, while Family Court counselling services are free for all, marriage counselling agencies are expected to charge clients who can afford to pay. Thus there is an ambivalence in the philosophy underlying government support for different points of stress along the marital relationship continuum. While all agencies state that no client is now turned away because of an inability to pay, it is not known how many potential clients are deterred from seeking help because of the cost they assume is involved. Clearly a fee of $10-15 would put marriage counselling out of the range of many working class couples.

Clarification of the government's position in relation to all aspects of funding marriage and divorce counselling services is essential if a uniform system of marriage support services is to be available to all who could benefit from assistance and information.

The Role of Marriage Counselling as a Community Resource

Related to what activities are defined as marriage counselling and how these services are to be funded, is the general role of marriage counselling. These concerns centre on the broader questions of 'what should marriage counselling be trying to do?' One approach may be to consider marriage counselling as one link in a chain of marriage (and family) support programs. Marriage follows along a continuum beginning with mate selection, progressing through the pre-marital relationship which may entail living together, to the early married partner stage, then family life with children and on to growing older as a couple again. Other key points in this relationship or life cycle model are times of divorce and remarriage.

Of course preparation for satisfying relationships begins even earlier in the parenting and family of origin environment. Often overlooked is the importance of the educational learning experience and the content of school curricula in shaping the expectations and developing the skills that have impact on the future marriages and family lives of young people.

Program diversity is another avenue for broadening the applicability of services to meet the needs of a wider clientele. For some people other forms of intervention may be most relevant. A booklet on 'How to be a more successful step-parent' for instance may appeal more than attending a group. Local community forums sponsored by schools or civic clubs that present topics such as 'Coping with divorce' may motivate some to seek further help if necessary or trigger new awareness in others that make additional help-seeking unneccessary.

It becomes clear that there are many points of intervention in the progress of relationships where the provision of education, information or counselling may be useful.

Whether the *Family Law Act*'s provisions for marriage counselling and divorce counselling services can or should encompass all these interventions is a matter for deliberation.

Community Awareness of Marriage Counselling Services

Another issue of concern is how to reach out to people in the community who could benefit from marriage counselling across the whole spectrum of services. While recognising that not everyone needs the assistance of expert advice or counselling to resolve marital problems and that many people prefer to use informal support networks, it is the 'hidden client' or those people who may benefit but who make no use of marriage counselling services that is a concern of all agencies. For example, only 20 per cent of participants in the Institute's Family Dissolution/Reformation Study had been to see a marriage counsellor. Few of our respondents had thought of counselling as a way to achieve a more amicable or less stressful separation. Their image of counselling was that of a 'marriage mender' and if they believed that reconciliation was impossible, then they did not see any purpose in attending. Even fewer respondents envisaged counselling as an early intervention to prevent the marriage from reaching a point of irretrievable breakdown.

Even more conspicuous is the continuing discrepancy between the number of female and male client interviews. Female clients account for at least twice as many interviews as males, and one question that always arises in discussion of marriage counselling is the apparent reluctance of many men to agree to or to initiate marriage counselling.

The image people hold of a resource such as marriage counselling will assist whether or not a service is seen as relevant. If clients seek marriage counselling too late in the breakdown of the relationship for positive intervention to take place, then perhaps methods of raising community awareness of services and what they offer would be valuable.

Publicising Marriage Counselling

For the past few years a proposal to publicise marriage counselling services through a film has been sent to the Attorney-General but has never been approved.

The Family Court reports great success with the use of a film that illustrates court proceedings and makes suggestions for reducing the traumatic effects of divorce on the whole family.

A media campaign would have dual objectives. Firstly, it would promote a general awareness of relationship issues highlighting ordinary concerns, problems and doubts that can beset any relationship. Secondly, it would provide information about resources that are available for dealing positively with common issues that arise in relationships and demonstrate that there are alternative ways of handling issues such as anger, conflict or lack of communication.

A clever advertising campaign might be one way to reduce the reluctance of many people to seek help.

A number of organisations have been successfully involved in local TV and radio programs that both raise community awareness of marriage counselling services and discuss relationship issues. Counsellors often speak to community groups with the same objectives in mind. Many smaller agencies could not, however, afford staff time for these extra-curricular activities.

It is suggested that the Attorney-General's Department allocate funds for the development of a national advertising project to promote community awareness of the availability and nature of marriage counselling and pre-marriage counselling programs.

Referral Agents

Since so many people in marital distress turn to community 'gatekeepers' it is essential that these helping professionals recognise the underlying difficulties and make appropriate decisions about referral where it would benefit the client.

Many of these 'gatekeepers' could benefit from brief training and educational programs that would enable them to use their influence to refer people to counselling when appropriate or to provide basic assistance at first contact. Alternately, marriage counsellors may branch out of their offices and work part-time or full-time in other settings. In England, approximately 100 counsellors are located on the premises of general practitioner's surgeries. Others work in prisons, hospitals and Citizens Advice Bureaux. (Marriage Matters 1979).

A number of organisations have sponsored seminars for doctors or lawyers in the community to achieve these aims. Several agencies are hoping to develop industry and business contacts. Currently eight per cent of referrals to marriage counselling agencies come from lawyers and 13 per cent come from doctors. As the Act is presently interpreted and implemented provision of training for 'gatekeepers' or other community helping professionals is not eligible for funding.

The Institute would endorse funds being made available to marriage counselling agencies under the Family Law Act to provide training to community gatekeepers to assist them in identifying and making initial intervention and referrals for marital problems.

Client Characteristics

Seminar participants were interested in arriving at a better understanding of the nature and characteristics of their clients.

Statistics on client characteristics are not collected uniformly by all approved agencies, and even where data are collected, it is not always summarised or analysed. (As mentioned previously the Institute is developing a uniform data sheet for use by the approved agencies.)

Patterns of client presenting problems reflect the general trends in marriage, divorce and remarriage described previously. There has been, for example, a steady increase in the number of clients who come for help with separation and divorce decisions. Counsellors also report an increase in couples who come with problems associated with remarriage or stepfamily situations.

Many agencies claim more clients are presenting with marital problems exacerbated by financial stress and unemployment.

Presenting problems

At a more specific level a recent New South Wales study concluded that the three major presenting problem areas were communication difficulties, the decision to separate or coping with a partner's leaving, and complaints about a partner's personality or behaviour. A Western Australian survey mirrored the same most commonly reported concerns.

This basic list of problems is a shorthand way of characterising dissatisfaction and unhappiness that often have roots in more fundamental issues affecting marriages. Conflicts and incompatibility are affected by rising expectations from marriage and changing attitudes towards the nature of marriage and the roles of men and women. These attitudes and behaviours are set in a social environment of increased permissiveness and opportunities for alternative lifestyles outside of marriage. Counsellors report that both men and women confront confusion in negotiating relationships within these changing frameworks of marriage and family.

Representativeness

Marriage counselling agencies have been criticised for being mainly middle-class oriented. Some individual agency studies refute this allegation. A New South Wales study showed that 16 per cent of clients were in unskilled jobs, another 16 per cent were in semi-skilled occupations and 13 per cent were in trades. The majority, 42 per cent, were in clerical jobs with only 6.5 per cent in the professions. At the Newcastle centre, 52 per cent of clients were in unskilled occupations.

Coordination of Marriage Support Services

Because the existence of most specialised agencies depends on funding as designated in the *Family Law Act*, it is difficult to separate out subjective from objective viewpoints on the issue of government provision and need.

What appears to be missing is the coordination of government policy relating to the provision of services in support of achieving satisfying marital and family relationships.

The Joint Select Committee (1980) proposed early on in the debate over passage of the *Family Law Act* that the *Marriage Act* and the *Family Law Act* be consolidated so that 'those contemplating marriage are appraised of not only marriage responsibilities but also the consequences that result from breakdown'. (Recommendation 5). Perhaps 'educated' would be a preferred wording.

Although both the *Marriage Act* and the *Family Law Act* are administered by the Attorney-General's Department, greater coordination of the services that support the successful establishment and maintenance of satisfying marital relationships seems in order.

Integration of Services

At times the role of the approved marriage counselling agencies appears to overlap with that of the Family Court Counselling Service. As originally envisaged, the Family Court Counselling Service provided both reconciliation and conciliation counselling dependent on clients' presenting problems and needs. In fact, because of overwhelming demand in the area of conciliating custody and access disputes, the tendency has been for all cases that would benefit from marriage counselling to be referred to approved marriage counselling agencies.

While the intent has been to evolve complementary spheres of influence for each counselling service, relations between the approved agencies and the court counsellors have not always been clear or mutually satisfying.

To illustrate this state of affairs, marriage counselling agencies point out that in 1982-83 only 658 referrals or 3 per cent of total new referrals were made by the Family Court to the approved agencies. In explanation, it needs to be mentioned that many clients who use the court counselling services are at a stage in their marriage breakdown where referral would not be appropriate and the conciliation skills of the court counsellors are most suitable.

Recently, however, concerted efforts have been made on the part of a number of approved agencies and their area Family Court Counselling Service to improve relations with the intent of clarifying the role each can perform to assist people in marital distress. For example, the Canberra Marriage Counselling Service reports that during the past year 'there has developed a good system of cross referrals so that each agency is clear about how they complement each other at different points in the process of marital breakdown'.

Nevertheless, while individual efforts are to be applauded, a more systematic review of the roles of the two services should be undertaken to ensure the most effective use of both services.

Consultative Committee on Marriage and Family Support Programs

The establishment of an inter-department review or consultative committee would be one way of achieving coordination of policy and linkages between diverse professionals, programs and agencies concerned with fostering positive and healthy relationships along the whole life cycle continuum.

Such a committee could include representatives from government health, education and welfare departments as well as from the Attorney-General's Department. The Director of the Family Court Counselling Service and a representative of the Institute of Family Studies could be included. Representatives of the approved agencies as well as other practitioners and community gatekeepers could be selected when appropriate or seconded when required.

The basic aim of such a committee would be to coordinate the activities within existing government departments to ensure an overall perspective and sensible distribution of resources and responsibilities. Broad consultation with community organisations and involved professionals would be carried out and increased cooperation and definition of responsibility between the Family Court Counselling Service, approved marriage counselling agencies, and education and welfare services could be promoted. Publicity and community awareness campaigns that educate the public about available services or offer useful information at a basic level so that individuals can recognise problems earlier and take steps to improve their situation themselves could be coordinated at the committee level.

In addition, the committee could investigate the feasibility of establishing more flexible rules governing the existing provision of services to encourage more localised community based efforts.

To avoid some of the pitfalls of creating yet another permanent bureaucratic body, such a committee could begin as an interim body modelled on the United Kingdom's Working Party on Marriage Guidance which was set up by the Home Office in consultation with the Department of Health and Social Security in 1979.

With these considerations in mind, the Institute recommends exploring the concept of establishing a Consultative Committee on Marriage and Family Support Programs to coordinate policy related to the provision of educational and counselling services. In this time of funding constraints an emphasis on coordination and collaboration, not duplication and competition, is required.

Referral network

The establishment of an integrated referral network based on accurate understanding of the strengths and limitations of each resource would be another way of ensuring coordination of services. If such a network could be forged, it may be more effective than formal structures like a consultative committee in improving the chances of an individual finding the appropriate resource wherever he or she turns for help with a marital problem — either acknowledged or camouflaged.

Family centres

Another approach towards improved coordination of services that has been considered is the establishment of Family Advisory Centres where a variety of counselling and practical welfare information could be obtained without the stigma sometimes attached to attending a designated marriage counselling centre. Financial counselling, vocational and employment advice are additional services that could be offered. A number of multi-service agencies operate in this manner already but have more of a welfare connotation. Expanding on the idea of advisory centres, Alexander (1983) has advocated setting up general family centres where child care, recreation, and programs for the elderly are offered. Provision for marriage counselling or marriage education services could easily be included at such centres. The Institute favours neighbourhood Family Support Centres drawing on the resources of existing agencies and acting as a key referral point for every family. We believe these could be developed at pre-schools or infant welfare centres which are a natural focal point in every local community. We develop this argument in our submission to the Victorian Review of Early Childhood Services.

Policy Recommendations

It must be stressed that the Institute of Family Studies does not see marriage counselling, marriage education, or even broader 'family support' programs as the sole or even major means by which governments can support family life. The most fundamental bases of family life are employment and income security, adequate housing and health services. The development of personalised support services to individuals can become something of a paradox if governments ignore the impact on families of inadequate policies in the areas of economic management and the provision of basic services such as housing, child care and income supports.

Nonetheless, we believe there is much room for improvement in the area of 'family support' programs. As our research so far has indicated, families do need community support, they can not live alone even if they want to. Community services are at present inadequately funded and poorly coordinated so there is a huge information gap and often wasteful duplication. There is the constant dilemma that inadequate funds must be spent on crisis intervention (not even cure) rather than on prevention. There is the concomitant danger that localisation of 'community based' services becomes an excuse for lower funding and ignores the real causes of family problems.

What is required is a total rethinking of the governmental role in providing family support. The Institute's Policy Background Papers and Policy Impact Seminars have made a good start in this direction and we look forward to active consultation with federal, state and local authorities on the implications of our research findings for future provision of family support programs.

5

Family Processes

Children in Families Study 100
Children in Divorce 102
Adjustment of Children in Widowed Families 104
The Marital Relationship 105

The need for studies focusing on internal family processes has arisen from the changes that have taken place in Australian families. Such changes include a falling birthrate from an average of seven children in a family late last century to an average of 2.07 per family in 1976; an increase in the number of married women in the paid labour force from 13 per cent in 1954 to 41 per cent in 1979; and the most controversial change of all, the increasing rate of marriage breakdown and consequent increase in the number of one-parent families from 7.1 per cent of families with children in 1969 to 13.2 per cent in 1981. This has occurred increasingly during the 1970s, with a concomitant decline in the number of 'traditional' families of head, spouse and children from 92.9 per cent of all families with children in 1969 to 86.8 per cent in 1981.

Children who grow up in the smaller families of today do not have the multiple influences of brothers and sisters which were common earlier this century. Many children grow up with a sibling of the same sex and do not experience the everyday intimacy and understanding of the opposite sex that most children experienced in the larger families of earlier times. Children in small families are usually closer in age and do not have the same opportunities to care for younger children or be cared for by older children that is a common occurrence in a big family. When children in the smaller contemporary family grow up and their own children are born, they may be the first babies with whom the new parents have ever had close contact.

For children in divorced or separated families, the situation is not static or stable even after the first upheaval. Many separated and divorced parents go on to remarry or establish de facto relationships. Thus, the one-parent family for many is a temporary and short lived form of the family, while for others it may be permanent or of long duration.

Marriage statistics indicate the rising rate of remarriage although not the number of children involved. In the period 1951-55, 6.6 per cent of bridegrooms and 7.2 per cent of brides had previously been divorced, whereas in 1981, 20.4 per cent of bridegrooms and 19.2 per cent of brides had been divorced. With this increase in numbers of remarriages, a proportionate increase in the number of children involved can also reasonably be expected. It can also be expected that an increasing number of de facto relationships will include at least one partner who has been married previously and in some cases has children, although once again there are no exact figures for the children involved.

Remarriage in itself is not a novelty as remarriages have occurred throughout history because of the death of a marriage partner, but the increase in the number of remarriages after divorce is a new trend which accompanies the increase in separation and divorce. Remarriages after the death of a partner differ significantly from a remarriage or de facto relationship after divorce or separation because in the latter, the original marriage partner is still alive and usually has access to the children, and thus indirectly and sometimes directly has some influence in the new marriage through their relationship with the children. Remarriages (and stable de facto relationships after divorce or separation) are thus much more complex ventures than remarriages after a death for both parents and children. But little is known about the experience of children in contemporary stepfamilies. Old images of wicked step-parents have not entirely been dismissed.

To ascertain how these changes and the life circumstances of individual families affect the development of competence in children is one of the major aims of the Children in Families Study. Two related studies on 'Children in Divorce' examine the effect of divorce on young children and adolescents.

Two other studies concerned with internal family processes have been undertaken by outside researchers in conjunction with the Institute. The first is a study of marital relationships and the second concerns Death of a Parent and adjustment of children in widowed families.

Children in Families Study

The aim of this project is to concentrate on children's views of family life within the private realm of the family and also family links with the broader community. We are interested in how children use their family as a resource, as a base from which to control the environment. Health, finances, emotional support, cultural values, decision-making processes, educational support vary from family to family, but all contribute to the child's development of competence or lack of it, in controlling the environment.

Competence in this study is taken to mean intelligence in the broadest sense, knowing how to act in situations rather than isolated knowlege, being able to change the environment as well as adapt to it. At an emotional level it means self-confidence to tackle things with an expectation, if not of immediate success, at least of having the confidence to try again.

In looking at children's perceptions of the family's links with the community, the Institute is interested in which resources are used by the child. Obviously as the child grows older, resources other than those of the family are available to a greater extent but the focus is on which resources and on the changes in perceptions of the family.

The emphasis on the privacy of the family in our society is one reason why children's views of family life are rarely studied by researchers, leaving the field to clinicians whose information is obtained when families and children seek help with problems. Thus much information currently available about child-family relationships is more concerned with difficulties which may be experienced than the life situation in the broad spectrum of ordinary families. In addition, children as interviewees are often seen as vulnerable on the one hand, or, on the other, likely to talk too much about the private life of the family. However, studies in related fields, indicate that it is possible to interview even quite young children about their understanding of personal experience.

Nevertheless, there were a number of problems which needed consideration before undertaking a major study based on child interviews. First, to what extent are children prepared to talk about personal topics with an interviewer who is a stranger to them? Secondly, if the child is prepared to talk about intimate and sometimes painful family matters, can it be done without too much emotional upheaval which may upset the child after the interview? Finally, and most importantly for this study, would it be possible to gain permission from parents and the children themselves in order to interview them?

Thus it can be seen that at the start of this study there were many methodological and other uncertainties which needed attention. As a result, the preliminary stage of this study was not static and uniform in approach to each interview but was flexible and developmental in form, so that new knowledge and changes could be accommodated as work progressed.

Approximately forty children from Melbourne primary and secondary schools and one country secondary school took part in the preliminary stage of the study. Few difficulties were experienced in the interview situation and the children actually helped with the wording and content where appropriate. School personnel and parents also cooperated and willingly supported the project.

Findings from the Pilot Study

Analysis of this preliminary study is limited first of all by the scope of the sample, secondly by the limitations of the interview schedule, and thirdly by the fact that the trends which emerge are just that — trends only. However, it is clear that there are some qualitative differences in the lives of many of the children in one-parent and stepfamilies when compared with those of most children in intact two-parent homes, although there are also many similarities. These differences are associated with the effect of moving house, economic matters including availability of jobs and the need for the parent to work, the addition of a new parent/adult to the family, and sometimes the effect of ongoing conflict. All these matters required more rigorous examination in the main study which is now completed and being analysed.

The most noticeable trend in the pilot study was the negative effect on children of ongoing conflict and hostility in their families. This was apparent whether the parents remained together or separated. If the conflict continued after separation the negative effect on the children remained. The associated fears and anxieties caused by conflict were clear in the children's answers to a number of questions.

All children in this sample saw their mothers in a positive light. She was good, kind, warm and nurturing, or a combination of these qualities plus others in similar vein. With the exception of some children from one-parent families, even the younger children were never scared of their mothers. However, some children in one-parent families were scared of their mother when she was in a bad mood. Other children often said their mothers sometimes 'got in a bad mood' but they were not scared of her. While none of the children in one-parent families indicated extreme fear of their mothers, they may have felt scared of her when she was stressed by the pressure of one parent doing the work of two. In all cases where the children were sometimes scared of their mother, there was no stepfather or male friend present in the household. This point is being further explored in the main study.

Children, and particularly younger children, were occasionally frightened of their father because he was big, had a loud voice, and got angry sometimes. In conflictual families, where the father was the focus of the conflict, the children had ambivalent or totally negative attitudes towards him. But most children had generally positive feelings towards their father who helped them, played with them and so on.

There were a few children in the pilot sample who were living with their mother and her male friend or new husband. In such cases the children were less positive and more negative in their attitudes to this new male figure in the household. They could see advantages in having him around for their mother's sake and at times for themselves, but they were rather distant from him. Unfortunately in the pilot study all the children in this category were adolescents. The mothers of the younger children sometimes had male friends but they were transitory, visiting sometimes but not living continuously in the household.

Children from one-parent and stepfamilies were more likely to have experienced a number of shifts of house in the last five years. These children found difficulties in coping with the change in school work and sometimes failed or slipped behind, particularly in mathematics. They left friends behind with each move and found making new friends at each place difficult. It was also difficult for them to make close friends. This suggests that some of the 'trauma' of divorce for children results from upheaval in the daily routine and loss of the security of one 'home', as much perhaps as from the divorce itself.

When asked if there was anything they would like to change about their families, young children whose parents had separated or divorced wanted their parents together again. However, the older children did not express this desire. Some children from non-intact families would like the economic situation to change for the better so their mothers would not have to work so hard or worry so much.

This preliminary study was designed to develop the interview schedule, to trial methodology, and to ascertain the attitudes of school staff, families and children to the study. The trends observed are useful guides for the main study but the sample is too small to draw any firm conclusions at this stage. It must also be pointed out that in many aspects of family life not covered in this brief description, there were more similarities than differences between two-parent families and one-parent or stepfamilies.

The Main Study

The results of the pilot study were encouraging, and indicated that a larger study of children's perceptions of family life would be feasible. It was decided to interview a representative sample of approximately 400 Victorian Year 3 and Year 10 students, with about half coming from non-traditional family types. However, since the proportion of non-intact families is relatively small and their location is not precisely known, the first phase of the sampling procedure involved locating them in the community. To accomplish this, 40 primary schools and 40 secondary schools were randomly selected from across the state of Victoria, with proportional representation of State, Catholic, and non-Catholic private schools. With the permission of the State authorities, school principals and teachers, 1340 Year 3 and 1234 Year 10 students completed a short family questionnaire. From this initial screening sample, students from intact and non-intact families were randomly selected, and they and one of their parents were approached for a detailed interview. To increase the number of respondents from non-intact families, a similar screening procedure was later carried out on a supplementary sample of 17 primary and 17 secondary schools in the Melbourne area known to have relatively high proportions of students from non-intact family types.

The targeted number of interviews has now been completed, and the data are being prepared for computer input and analysis. Although it is too early to determine the representativeness of the sample for the main study, an analysis of the screening sample revealed that the students, and their families, matched a number of Victorian population characteristics closely, including the type of school attended, father's occupation, mother's employment status, and parent's country of birth. The final stage of the research will involve in-depth follow-up interviews with approximately 60 of these families.

Children in Divorce

Since its inception, the Institute has been asked frequently to explain how divorce affects a child. Between 1976 and 1981 a total of 325 704 children under age 18 have been affected by their parents' divorce and an unknown additional number by their parents' separation. The best known piece of research on children's response to divorce is that of Wallerstein and Kelly, a series of studies of a clinical nature conducted on a small and unrepresentative sample of Californian middle class children. Their findings are valuable in that they document adjustments over time, but there is no control group to check how different these children might be from others in intact families where conflict and tension may also exist.

It was important therefore for the Institute of Family Studies to attempt some comparative Australian research with a better research design. We were not happy that so many authorities, including the Family Court, had to rely on a small-scale clinical study from the United States when discussing how children were affected by divorce.

The Institute's Family Dissolution/Reformation Study drew a sample of people divorced in 1979 in three States. Since it was the Institute's first attempt to examine the process of divorce in the Family Court, we had to cover several areas such as the reasons for marital breakdown, their experience of the legal process and how they coped after divorce. Obviously, some of these people had children and we asked about custody and access arrangements. But the response of their children to divorce was an issue much too complex to tackle in an already long interview. We decided therefore to contract two studies directed specifically at children in divorce. One was to look at young children in the 6-8 age bracket, the other at adolescents in the 14-15 age group, since overseas research clearly indicated marked differences in the reactions of children of different age groups to parental divorce. In addition, we insisted that these studies must have control groups of children from intact families so that findings of emotional upset or behaviour disorders could be checked against family processes rather than being attributed simply to marriage breakdown. We knew also from other studies that the conflict leading up to separation, with its accompanying decline in the quality of parenting, was likely to be more traumatic than the final divorce itself.

The study of adolescents was conducted by Rosemary Dunlop and Ailsa Burns of Macquarie University. The aim of this research was to study the adolescent experience of divorce and to compare the adjustment of these teenagers with adolescents from similar backgrounds who live in intact two-parent families. Several standardised measures of various aspects of adjustment were used in conjunction with semi-structured interviews of the adolescent and a parent; where possible both parents were interviewed.

As Dunlop and Burns state:

> It is widely believed that teenagers from broken homes are more likely to be maladjusted than those from intact families. Little is really known about whether this is merely a stereotype, or whether it has a firm basis in reality. Studies of juvenile delinquents, reports of clinicians working with disturbed youngsters and surveys of homeless boys and girls have all reported a high incidence of disrupted family life. These findings are alarming, but what is often overlooked is that the studies start with a group that is already defined as a problem. Very little is known about the far greater numbers of children who do not end up in the juvenile courts, at the psychiatrist, or on the streets.

The sample for this study consists of 41 adolescents from intact families who were recruited from high schools in Sydney and 40 from divorcing families who were contacted through the Family Court. Parents in the divorcing group had been separated on average 18 months before the interview. It is intended that this study be the first stage of a longitudinal study which examines the experience of these adolescents over time.

Data from this first stage have now been analysed and the first report should be available in the near future.

The main result of the analysis to date has been to refute the view that a teenager from a divorced family is significantly more likely than one from an intact family to be psychologically disturbed. No differences on a whole series of adjustment measures between the adolescents in the representative sample of divorcing families and those from a comparable group of intact homes were found. This does not mean that there are no disturbed children among these adolescents, but that there are similar proportions of disturbed and well-adjusted teenagers in both groups.

The findings do not suggest that divorce has *no* effect on adolescents. To gain an insight into the more complex and subtle consequences of divorce, and the patterns within families that may make the experience easier or more painful, a qualitative analysis of individual case histories has been undertaken.

The second study of children in divorce has been conducted by Geoff Smiley, Edna Chamberlain and Len Dalgleish in conjunction with an advisory committee from the Social Work Department of the University of Queensland. Their sample includes children 6-8 years old at the time of their parents' separation. The intention was to sample one group of children about 1 year after separation and another group 2 to 3 years after separation. This sample was to be matched for socio-economic characteristics, sex and age, with children from intact families. Both sampling and interviewing such a group involves great difficulties and there have been problems in obtaining the sample of children of the correct age and time span from separated and divorced families. This sample is now being obtained through the courts. A report is not yet available but some findings will be presented at the Australian Family Research Conference in November 1983.

The focus of this study is the social and economic changes which may occur after separation and divorce and the way in which teachers perceive these children.

Adjustment of Children in Widowed Families

As indicated earlier, remarriage after the death of a partner differs from remarriage after divorce. So too, does the 'separation' of a child from a parent who dies differ from the separation caused by marital breakdown. The Institute was fortunate to be able to add in some items on children to a large study of widowed men and women being conducted by Linda Rosenman, Art Shulman and Michelle Levine. Their report on this study is now to hand. It examines the situation of a sub-sample of 126 widowed mothers and fathers with at least one child under 18 years of age. The focus is on the effects of the death of a parent on the child as reported by the surviving parent. The family is viewed as a system which has a life of its own where the death of a member brings about permanent change to the system of operation.

Death of a parent is associated with a number of other changes in the family. The grief and mourning of the remaining parent, a change in economic circumstances usually to a lower standard of living and re-allocation of household tasks and responsibilities between family members, all have some parallels to the situation in a separated or divorced family.

Almost half the families in the sample lived for some time with a terminally ill parent.

The effect on children of the stress, tension and depression in the household appeared to depend on their level of awareness of the situation and involvement within the household. Very young children who are totally dependent on the family were reported as being aware of changes in caretakers, periods of absence of a parent and the pre-occupation of both parents with other issues. It appears that older children may be less physically dependent on the family but more aware of the terminal illness and able to see the deterioration in a parent's health.

School age children helped by carrying extra responsibilities in the household and caring for younger siblings. Reaction to the death of the parent was related to age to some extent. Very young children were more likely not to fully understand and to be upset and sad. Older school age children were reported as being shocked and upset, some children in this group being unable to accept the death and talk about it while others were quiet and withdrawn.

Parents caught up in their own grief had little emotional energy to cope with the grief and feelings of the child, and in several cases the remaining parent did not tell the child the parent was dead. Some children showed their reaction to the death through a deterioration in school work or truanting behaviour. In some cases teachers were not told of the death of a parent.

Of the parents who had since remarried, twelve men and one woman, most had formed the new relationship within a year of the death. One of the most frequent reasons given for wishing to remarry (whether they actually remarried or not) was to provide a new parent figure for the children. Of those who actually remarried, all the remarried fathers reported that their children were happy with the new marriage

Some parents reported insecurity in their children up to 3 years after the death and some children expressed concern and fear for their remaining parent.

Parents reported that their children were a source of emotional support after the death of their partner. But they also reported that children limited their ability to establish a new social life of their own.

The Marital Relationship

Our national sample of 2500 young people aged 18-34 is the main vehicle for looking at how marriages are formed and sustained. Because it includes many who are not yet married, we can look, over time, at how and why they make choices about whether to marry or not, whether to have children or not, whether to stay married or not. As reported in Chapter 1, the first stage of that study found a strong affirmation of marriage and the family as an institution, despite increased experience of 'living together' and delays in both marrying and having children.

Again, one interview cannot give a complete picture of process, so we contracted a sub-study to look in closer detail at how young 'intact' couples viewed their marriage and worked at sustaining it. This was conducted by Dr Tamara Kotler and Helen Glezer, with a sample of sixty men and women whose marriages were, as far as we could tell from the initial interview, working well. The information gained from these in-depth case studies will be invaluable for the development of questions on 'family functioning' to be asked of the whole national sample when we return to reinterview them in 1984/85.

The sample consisted of thirty men and thirty women who were married but not to each other. Each group was divided into three levels corresponding to the first three stages of the family life cycle, using the age of the oldest child as a criterion of family stage. The three sub-groups consisted of marriages without children, with pre-school children and with school-age children respectively.

Respondents were visited in their homes where they were interviewed for two to three hours and where they completed several questionnaires on aspects of the marital relationship. The interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and later coded.

The interview closely explored the circumstances under which the partners met and factors which influenced their decision to marry, including the past and present part played by both sets of partners. However, the central focus of the inquiry was on ways in which the partners communicated, showed care and understanding for each other as well as their characteristic style of dealing with conflict. Changes over the course of the marriage were also explored and linked to the effect of children on the relationship.

The questionnaires asked about the respondents' views of their own and their partners' personality characteristics, as well as views about their own parents when growing up. The latter were sought on the assumption that present behaviour and judgements could be influenced by past experiences with parents.

There were also questions covering the distribution of domestic and social roles in the family and satisfaction with the marital relationship and with present life circumstances.

Results from these sets of questions consistently show differences over the three stages of family formation. These indicate that satisfaction with self and partner decline for both men and women as the stresses arising from child bearing and child rearing increase.

However, results indicate different stages of maximum stress for men and women. For men, there is an initial decline in marital satisfaction followed by some improvement at later stages in the marriage. It is likely that the transition to parenthood coincides with pressure to become established in an occupation and that the combined stresses affect their experience of marriage.

By contrast, for women, there is a progressive decline in marital satisfaction suggesting that domestic responsibilities combined with full or partial loss of work status have cumulative and negative effects on women.

Preliminary analysis of the interview data indicates that respondents perceive strong links between the quality of parenting experienced in childhood and the stability of adult personality. That is, those who come from well-functioning, intact families and who feel accepted by their parents were reported as being fairly secure and stable individuals in adult life. Those with disrupted backgrounds and disinterested parents tend to be more insecure and anxious as adults. Such individuals were often reported to benefit from marriage to a more secure partner and to grow in self-confidence over time.

While the coded interview material merely systematises views which are intuitively held by respondents, it is nevertheless consistent with other research evidence that the nature of the marital relationship has effects on each partner's mental health and on the quality of life in a family.

The Institute's research has therefore reached the stage of being able to describe in some detail how family processes operate in Australia. It should be mentioned that, in addition to those findings mentioned in this Chapter, we are preparing reports on the life situations of groups at different points in the family life cycle, based on the national Family Formation Study. For exampie, findings about the background characteristics, current circumstances and attitudes of persons living together were made available to the Sackville inquiry into de facto relationships.

6
Administration and Research Support

Staffing 108
Financial Administration 109
Computer Services 109
The Publication Program 110
The Library Program 111
Database Development Program 112

Staffing

During the year efforts continued to establish a viable staffing level for the Institute. An increase of five to the staff ceiling granted in June 1982 has provided much needed relief, but proposals for further growth in 1983-84 were not successful. The Institute's staffing level now stands at 21 full-time and 8 part-time.

To some degree remaining gaps in staffing have been covered by the short term engagement of specialist assistants, mostly at the Research Assistant level. There remain, however, several areas of research expertise in which the Institute is deficient. As well, the Family Information Centre is considerably under-resourced for its publication and information dissemination functions and routine administrative tasks continue to overload and distract senior staff members from approved duties.

The five additional positions were filled in the following manner:

- Following negotiation with the Public Service Board, a position of Deputy Director, Research was established and advertised nationally. Peter McDonald, formerly of the Department of Demography, Australian National University, was appointed in April and took up duty in June 1983.
- Peter d'Abbs of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Darwin Community College was appointed as Research Fellow in the Family Support Studies area.
- Helen Glezer who had been a part-time Research Assistant with the Institute since August 1980, was appointed as a full-time Research Fellow to the Social Structure and Family Process Studies area.
- Catherine McConville was appointed as Administrative Assistant and has subsequently taken over as Administrative Officer.
- Cheryl Manion was appointed as Secretary/Word Processor Operator.

A number of other staff changes have taken place during the year. The following staff have left the Institute:

- Freya Headlam who had been working in the Family Law Studies area left to take up full-time studies toward a PhD at La Trobe University.
- Zara Rose, Receptionist/Typist resigned to return to Sydney.
- Donald Stewart has been seconded to serve as Director of Research for the Victorian Parliament's Social Development Committee for a period of two years.
- Des Storer resigned to take up the position of Director of Research for the Victorian Ethnic Affairs Commission.
- Ann Tremayne of the Methodology Unit resigned.

New staff appointments during 1982-83 have been:

- Paul Amato from the James Cook University of North Queensland joined the Institute as a part-time Research Fellow in the Family and Education Studies area.
- Gordon Carmichael of the Department of Demography, Australian National University has taken a two year appointment and is working in the Social Structure and Family Process Studies area.
- Kate Funder who has worked in several capacities with the Victorian Education Department was appointed as Research Fellow and is working in the Family Law Studies area.
- Sonia Savannah was appointed to the position of Receptionist/Typist.
- Elizabeth Sharman has taken up duty as Information Officer.
- Fiona Scott was appointed as part-time Librarian in the Family Information Centre.
- Robert Wilks has taken up the position of Computer Systems Officer (part-time) in the Methodology Unit.

A list of Institute staff over the period of this Report together with a list of major staff achievements and publications is at Appendix 1.

Financial Administration

A major proportion of the Institute's budget each year is directed toward meeting costs which are relatively fixed. Salaries and associated costs (including provision for employer superannuation contributions) accounted for about 45 per cent of total expenditure in 1982-83. Other major items in this fixed category include rent, postage and telephones, computer and other equipment maintenance and equipment hire which accounted for a further 15 per cent.

A second category of expenditure might be styled 'semi-fixed' and includes items such as travel, office supplies, printing of publications, library (books, periodicals, newspapers, data base development, etc.), minor works and incidentals. These items are partly fixed in that they are predicated on a level of activity determined for the most part by the 'fixed' items above. However some flexibility exists to meet priority changes. Expenditure in this category accounted for approximately 20 per cent of the total 1982-83 allocation.

Expenditure on the remaining 20 per cent of the budget varies from year to year depending primarily on the requirements of the research program. In some years it will be heavily weighted toward data collection while in others it will be on data analysis and publication of findings. In 1982-83 the latter has been the case. Research Operations items are the major component of this portion of the budget which also includes provision for the Support Grants program.

A summary of budget information is at Appendix 2.

Computer Services

In April 1983 the Institute's PRIME computer was upgraded to 2 megabytes of memory and to 900 megabytes of on-line disk storage. The memory upgrade resulted in vastly improved interactive response times and the additional disk storage has enabled work to commence on large data sets.

The system is now supporting fifteen interactive users — eight research users, three word-processor users, two Family Information Centre (FIC) users and two software development users.

The number of users is anticipated to increase to aproximately twenty-five over the next two financial years. Some research staff who are currently not users are planning to become users and some increase in research staff numbers is also envisaged. The computerisation of administrative functions which is currently being implemented will produce at least three new users. It is also planned to have two extra word processor users.

To support the anticipated growth in the number of users and the applications they will be running, hardware upgrades and software acquisitions will be required.

The major hardware upgrade envisaged is an increase in Central Processor Unit power to ensure the throughput of statistical analysis runs on large data sets and to maintain reasonable interactive response times for an increased user base. Additional terminals will also be required.

Software tools for the structuring and retrieval of free text data are required for applications programming for research, FIC and administrative purposes. The need for graphics software is being investigated. Furthermore, since statistical software such as GENSTAT is now being written in FORTRAN 77 it may become necessary to acquire a FORTRAN 77 compiler in order to be able to maintain and modify the statistical packages which the Institute uses.

The Publication Program

The editorial section of the Family Information Centre continued to publish a variety of works as part of the Institute's overall research objective of providing information on matters which affect families and their well-being in Australia. Three new series of publications were created to complement the variety of types of research papers and reports being generated by the Institute.

Two issues of the *Newsletter* were distributed in October 1982 and February 1983. Four new titles were added to the *Discussion Paper* series: No. 7: *Violence and the family* by Donald E. Stewart; No. 8: *Singles in Australian society* by Robert Staples (one of the 1982 Visiting Fellows, Associate Professor Staples came from the University of California, San Francisco); No. 9: *Changing laws for changing families* by Patricia Harper; and No. 10: *Children's participation in divorce* by Don Edgar and Margaret Harrison. Such has been the demand for these discussion papers that several of the earlier titles are being revised for reprinting in August 1983.

Two further *Working Paper* titles were prepared: No. 4: *One parent families and educational disadvantage* by Don Edgar and Freya Headlam, and No. 5: *Divorce in Australia* by Donald E. Stewart and Margaret Harrison. A revised edition of Margaret Harrison's *Informal Marriage* (Working Paper No. 1) was released in October 1982.

The first of the new series, *Monographs*, is designed to stimulate public discussion and debate on significant issues affecting family well-being. This series is for longer works on topics of research interest or on policy areas under study within the context of the Institute's major research projects. The first monograph was written by Peter d'Abbs entitled, *Social support networks: a critical review of models and findings* and was prepared in association with the setting up of Study 4: Family Support Networks. Its initial use as conceptual thinking material on methodological problems in research on support networks has, by its publication, been expanded now to provide researchers with a reference work on research studies that explore the relationships between the structure of people's social networks of friends, relatives, neighbours and associates on the one hand and, on the other, various aspects of individual well-being and hardship.

The second monograph title, *Equity and the impact on families of the Australian tax-transfer system* by Peter Saunders, was used as the basis for a seminar held in Melbourne in August 1982. The paper was commented on by two leading economists, Professor Ronald Henderson, former Director of the Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, University of Melbourne, and Meredith Edwards, then a Senior Lecturer in Economics at Canberra College of Advanced Education. The Saunders paper provides a framework within which the current system of tax-transfers and policies designed to reform it can be analysed and assessed.

Following the pattern of publishing works that will provide public discussion of relevant and current policy issues, the first two *Policy Background Papers* were released in April 1983 as the basis for a round of public seminars on services to families. These papers, although commissioned by the Institute, do not necessarily represent any official view of the Institute of Family Studies, but remain the views of the authors which the Institute is pleased to present as contributions to public debate. The first two titles are *Towards a national child care policy* by Deborah Brennan (Social Research and Evaluation Ltd., Sydney) and *Services to families: with many a slip* by Jim Alexander (Social Research and Evaluation Ltd., Sydney).

The third of the new series, *Occasional Papers*, was created in the financial year 1982-83 covered by this Report. This series is designed to present research on a variety of subjects pertinent to the Institute's research program. Many of these papers will result from commissioned work and many will be literature reviews of specialised subjects. The first was of this latter type, an annotated bibliography titled *New information technology: impacts on families in Australia* by Ruth Beresford.

Occasional Paper No. 2 is a report by Margaret Harrison of a pilot study of the practices of courts, registries, and judges in relation to Section 63 of the *Family Law Act*. This study was conducted as a result of a request by the Family Law Council and it will be followed by further reports on studies on Family Court matters and practice.

In May 1983, the Institute printed its first report to respondents of the preliminary data analysed by the Study 4 team titled *Social support in an Australian community*. This respondents' report was released in Geelong by the Institute so that those who had taken part and given their time in this study could see the initial statistical findings taken from the interviews on social support. This initial report is to be followed by other works which will offer thorough analysis of the data gathered in this study of the Geelong community.

Including the *Selected Reading Lists* (see below under reference services), the Institute published 21 new titles as well as producing and disseminating brochures on the Institute's functions, a Publications List, the list of 'Periodical Holdings in the FIC' and brochures and posters for the community-based services seminars held in April and May 1982 in Melbourne, Adelaide, Hobart and Sydney, and for the Australian Family Research Conference to be held in Canberra in November 1983, and the 20th International Committee on Family Research Seminar to be held in Melbourne in August 1984.

Distribution of IFS publications

The Institute's publications have continued to be distributed free of charge to those registered on the mailing list and to those who request our limited distribution publications such as the *Monographs*, *Occasional Papers* and *Policy Background Papers*. The mailing list, divided into fifteen categories of users, now contains over 3400 separate addresses and, at each mailing, over 3500 copies are distributed. In addition, copies of our publications are sent out each week to people who seek information from the FIC. Other copies are distributed at the public seminars held by the Institute and by research staff who give talks or papers to organisations and at conferences.

Press and Media Contact

Interest in the Institute and its research has always been high and with the release of selected research data and the public policy seminars, response from the print media, television and radio has been good.

In June 1983, the Institute employed a consultant to assist with development of better press liaison. At this time a revised media contact list of over 300 addresses was developed.

The Library Program

The Family Information Centre has been collecting materials now for three years. Over this period a steady ordering program has been maintained. Each year approximately 1000 new titles have been purchased and over 500 volumes have been acquired by gift or exchange with similar research units around the world. The Centre now also subscribes to almost 650 serial and periodical titles of which over half are received free or through our exchange program. Other materials acquired for the Centre are reports, conference papers, pamphlets and news clippings which go towards building the Centre's store of up-to-date information on what organisations are doing in Australia and overseas in relation to family related research or services for families.

During 1982-83, the FIC continued its work on automating library orders. Several data files have been compiled for the maintenance of information (including costs) of the 650 subscriptions currently being received. This work enables the FIC to update regularly its list of periodical titles held, as well as to give reports on current costs and renewals of subscriptions. In August 1982 a new booklet titled 'Periodicals in the Family Information Centre' was produced. This was distributed to Institute staff as well as to other libraries and organisations that use the Centre's resources.

Reference Services

Each year, as the Institute becomes better known, the number of requests for information on families has increased. The FIC handles most of the telephone requests from the public. Five new reading lists were compiled on topics of current research interest to assist library users. Titles were: 'Women and work'; 'Children's rights and parents' rights'; 'De facto marriage'; 'Voluntary childlessness'; and 'Stepfamilies'.

In addition, library staff compiled a summary of key research papers on family formation particularly on aspects of leaving home, marital timing, cohabitation and parenting. This summary was prepared in conjunction with Study 2 (Family Formation Study) researchers.

Inter-library Loans

The last 12-month period saw a concerted effort to build up bookstock in areas previously not well served. This has led to less reliance on the loan of books from other research libraries. The demand for journal articles published prior to 1980 remains, but overall demand is less than the previous financial year due to the increased number of titles now on subscription.

Database Development Program

Early in 1983 work was begun on the creation of an automated database of Australian Family Studies Literature (AFAM) which built on investigative work in the previous financial year on the types of documents to be included. ACI Computer Services was approached as the most appropriate bureau to service the project because of its links to AUSINET (Australian Information Network) which will enable the pilot database to be tested nationally by all AUSINET users in early 1984. The first 200 documents have been indexed and were entered on the database in June. A further 400 documents are in process of preparation. A variety of document types is being entered including articles from Australian journals, conference papers, selected book chapters and reports from research centres around Australia. In the first part of the project only published documents will be included. It is intended that entries of research in progress and theses will be included in the second stage of the trial in 1984.

Table 6.1 Inter-library loan requests and receipts, July 1982-June 1983

	Items requested*	*Items received*	*Total transactions*
1982			
July-December	1094	1140	2234
1983			
January-June	424	295	720
Total	1518	1435	2953

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* Includes items requested again when not available at the first library approached.

Appendix 1

The staff of the Institute 114
Staff publications 115
Staff — Major achievements 116

The Staff of the Institute

Director

Don Edgar
BA MEd (Melb.) PhD (Stanford)

Deputy Director, Research

Peter McDonald
B Com (UNSW) PhD (ANU) (from 25 June 1983)

Assistant Director, Management

David Keane
BA (ANU) MBA (Melb.)

Administration

Rhonda Carrington
Peter Good
Cheryl Manion (from 12 August 1982)
Cath McConville (from 11 August 1982)
Sonia Savannah (from 4 May 1983)
Jennie Sellman*
Leanne Thomson* (from 6 June 1983)

Computer Centre

Andrew Prolisko
BA (La Trobe)
Ann Tremayne* (until 6 May 1983)
Terry Tremayne
BA (Melb.)

Family Information Centre

Mari Davis
BA (Melb.) MLib (Monash) ALAA
Noreen O'Riordan*
Fiona Scott
Dip Lib (BCAE) (from 10 February 1983)
Deborah Whithear
BA (Syd.) DipLib (UNSW) ALAA

Information Officer

Elizabeth Sharman
BA (Tas.) DipLib (TCAE) (from 1 March 1983)

Research

Peter d'Abbs
BA (Hons) (Melb.) MA (Exeter) PhD (Melb.) (from 9 May 1983)
Paul Amato*
BA (Hons) (California State) MA (San Francisco) PhD (James Cook) (from 1 February 1983)
Andrew Burbidge*
BA MA PhD (Melb.)
Kate Funder
BA (Melb.) BEd (Monash) MA (Melb.) MAPS (from 9 May 1983)
Helen Glezer
BA (Melb.) MA (La Trobe) MAPS
Patricia Harper*
BA Dip Ed (Melb.)
Margaret Harrison
LLB (Melb.) LLM (McGill)
Freya Headlam*
BA (Melb.) DipLib (UNSW) (until 30 June 1983)
Christine Kilmartin*
BSocStud (Qld.)
Kerry Lovering
BSc (Syd.) MA (UCLA) Dip Ed (Melb.)
Frank Maas
BEc (Monash) BEd (La Trobe) Dip Ed (Monash)
Gay Ochiltree
BA BEd (La Trobe) TPTC (Toorak S.C.)
Don Stewart
BA (Durham) MA (Leicester) PhD (Otago) PGCertEd (Oxford) (until 8 April 1983)
Des Storer
BA MA (WA) (until 9 March 1983)
Ilene Wolcott
BA (Rochester) MA (American Univ.)

* Part-time

Staff Publications

Paul Amato

(with Smithson, M. and Pearce, P.) *Dimensions of Helping Behaviour*. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1983.

Helping Behaviour toward the Handicapped: A field Exercise. In S. Hausfeld, M. McCabe, R.P. Power and J. Smith (Eds.), *Research exercises in introductory psychology*. Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983.

Meditation: An exercise in the deployment of attention. In S. Hausfeld, M. McCabe, R.P. Power and J. Smith (Eds.), *Research exercises in introductory psychology*. Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983.

(with McInnes, I.R.) Affiliative behaviour in diverse environments: A consideration of pleasantness, information rate, and the arousal-eliciting quality of settings. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 1983, 2, 110-123.

Peter d'Abbs

IFS Monograph No. 1, *Social support networks: a critical review of models and findings*, July, 1982.

Mari Davis

(Editor) *Australia's industrial future: communications;* selected papers and abstracts from Section 33 ANZAAS, 53rd Congress, Macquarie University, 1982. 50pp. Published Melbourne, ANZAAS Section 33, 1983.

Don Edgar

2nd Edition 1982 of Edgar, D.E. *Introduction to Australian Society: a Sociological Perspective*, Prentice Hall, first published 1980.

Chapter in book by R.K. Browne & L.E. Foster, *Sociology of Education: Australian and New Zealand Studies*, Macmillan, 1982.

Chapter in *The Church and Families*, Joint Board of Christian Education, 1982, 'Facing up to family change: challenges for church and community'.

IFS Discussion Paper No. 6, with Gay Ochiltree, *Family change and early childhood education*, August 1982.

IFS Discussion Paper No. 10, with Margaret Harrison, *Children's participation in divorce*, March 1983.

IFS Working Paper No. 4, with Freya Headlam, *One-parent families and educational disadvantage*, October 1982.

Patricia Harper

Who is my family? Who cares for me? The legal status and family relationship of children and their families: does the law enable or prevent? *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, Vol. 7, No. 4, December 1982.

Who is my family? Who cares for me? Legal status and relationship of children and their families. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 18, No. 2, May 1983 — Special Edition 'On the Family Law Act'.

Joint author — 'The natural mother's view of adoption' in *Understanding Adoption — a practical guide*, ed. Rosie Snow, 1983.

IFS Discussion Paper No. 9, *Changing laws for changing families*, December 1982.

Margaret Harrison

IFS Discussion Paper No. 10 with Don Edgar; *Children's participation in divorce*, August 1982.

IFS Occasional Paper No. 2, *Survey of Practices: Section 63, Family Law Act*, June 1983.

IFS Working Paper No. 5 with Don Stewart; *Divorce in Australia*, October 1982.

Freya Headlam

IFS Working Paper No. 4 with Don Edgar; *One Parent Families and Educational Disadvantage*, October 1982.

Kerry Lovering

Evaluation of Social Security Rent Arrears Scheme Report to Ministry of Housing (Victoria), January 1983 with Eva Learner.

'Rent Arrears Plan Wins Approval' in *Australian Society*, Vol. 2 (5), June 1983.

Family Impact Seminar Canberra 1981, IFS Report.

Gay Ochiltree

'Changing Families a Challenge for Teachers' in *Interview* published by C.G.C.S. Education Department Vic. with Don Edgar.

IFS Discussion Paper No. 6 with Don Edgar, *Family Change and Early Childhood Development*, August 1982.

Liz Sharman

Women and work, Children's rights and parent's rights, Defacto marriage — Selected Reading Lists, Melbourne, Family Information Centre, 1982.

(Editor) *Community Directory*, Melbourne, Sunshine City Council, 1983.

Don Stewart

IFS Working Paper No. 5 with Margaret Harrison; *Divorce in Australia*, October 1982.

IFS Discussion Paper No. 7, *Violence and the Family*, October 1982.

Des Storer

Social support in an Australian community: first report to respondents of a survey conducted in Geelong, May 1982 (with Arthur Faulkner and Jean McCaughey).

Ilene Wolcott

(Editor) *Parenting after Separation*, Centre for Continuing Education, ANU, Institute of Family Studies, Canberra 1982.

Staff — Major achievements

Paul Amato's PhD in Social Psychology from James Cook University of North Queensland was conferred in May, 1983.

Andrew Burbidge's PhD in Economics from Melbourne University was conferred in March, 1983. Andrew was seconded for four months from August 1982 to the Victorian Government's Income Security Task Force.

Don Edgar was appointed Chairman of the Australian Values Study Survey, a group consisting of academic and corporate members formed to carry out an Australian study along the lines of the European Values Study.

Patricia Harper was appointed Convenor of the Women's Advisory Council to the Premier of Victoria. Patricia is also a member and deputy chairperson of the Victorian Child Welfare Legislation and Practice Review Committee.

Frank Maas was seconded for three months to the Victorian Department for Community Welfare Services to assist with the development of a Community Welfare Policy for Victoria.

Appendix 2

Budget Information

1982-83 *Expenditure* $		*1983-84* *Appropriation* $
610 649	Salaries	696 000
73 624	Travel	95 900
129 547	Office Requisites	124 000
58 036	Postage and Telephones	64 600
117 900	Office Services	143 600
54 290	Library	49 500
38 354	Computer Services	44 200
6 179	Consultants	20 000
20 251	Incidentals	28 200
327 822	Research Operations	350 000
74 031	Works	28 000
84 261	Superannuation	95 000
1 595 214		1 739 000